

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

COUNCIL TO ESTABLISH ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MINUTES FOR APRIL 6, 2010 MEETING

MEMBER PRESENT

Chair Senator Barbara Cegavske (Las Vegas)
Amy Carvalho (Las Vegas)
Sharon Beatty (Las Vegas)
Ben Sayeski (Las Vegas)
Assemblyman David Bobzien (Carson City)
Steve Laden (Carson City)
Evelyn Allred (Carson City)
Kellie Crosby-Sturtz (Carson City)

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Dr. Keith Rheault, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Lori Johnson, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
Linda Nance, Secretary to the Council
Carol Crothers, Director of Accountability Programs and Assessment Curriculum,
Nevada Department of Education.
Cindy Sharp, Assistant Director, Curriculum and Standards, Nevada Department of
Education
Dave Brancamp, Math Consultant, Nevada Department of Education

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE

Bill Hanlon, Director of Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program
Jill Derby, Member of Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF)
Rosanne Richards, Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program
Karen Pedersen
Cheryl Blomstrom
Ray Bacon, Member of BRTF representing Nevada Manufacturers Association

1. Call to Order; Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting of the Academic Standards Council was called to order at 9:06 a.m. Chair Senator Barbara Cegavske asked that attendance be indicated as above and a quorum was present.

Chair Cegavske conducted the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Overview of Race to the Top Requirements and Common Core Standards Development Process.

Dr. Keith Rheault reviewed the process for adopting the Common Core Standards (CCS). Two documents were presented; a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding which both Governor Gibbons and Dr. Rheault signed last May, and a document of Race To The Top (RTTT) requirements relative to the Common Core Standards.

To start the process, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) agreed to work toward developing Common Core Standards. The only two states who chose not to participate were Texas and Alaska. The intention was fewer, clearer, and more rigorous standards in both English and Math that all states would use. These standards are aligned to college and workplace expectations using 21st Century Skills. The CCS will be internationally benchmarked to prepare students for success in global economies. Additionally, any standards included in the final document would be research and evidence-based.

Because of the magnitude of this project, thousands of people provided input on development of these Common set of standards. The people developing these standards are highly regarded experts in their field. There has been improvement with each draft and final comments were received last Friday. This draft is a good set of standards that may require minimal revision. Participation in the program was voluntary and states would have up to 3 years to adopt the standards. This works well for us. Math standards were last revised in 2006 and, because revisions rotate in a 7-year cycle, the next revision for Math would be 2013. Consequently, the 3-year period would fall into our normal revision cycle and still be in line with textbook adoption.

As part of the competitive RTTT application (the USDOE \$4.3 billion dollar funding), USDOE liked the voluntary common core standards so well, they included a mandate to adopt the CCS in order to compete for the funding. There are two phases for applying. The first phase ended January 19, with 40 states applying for funding. They selected 15 states and the District of Columbia for interviews as finalists and only awarded funding to two states, Tennessee and Delaware. Nevada was not eligible under the first phase because of the statutory barrier to using student achievement data for teacher evaluations. The recent Special Session of the Legislature revised that prohibition and we are now eligible to apply for Phase 2 applications, due June 1. Nevada will use the scoring of the Phase I applications as a critique.

The application provides for 500 total points; 70 points relate to standards and assessment. The first 20 points are for participating in an assessment consortium. Nevada has reviewed several consortiums. Adopting the CCS will give Nevada an additional 20 points. Phase II applications are due June 1, we can amend our application and receive full credit for the 20 points if the CCS is adopted between June 1 and August 2.

Dr. Rheault explained that today's meeting is to provide basic information to the Council on Common Core Standards and our application for Race to the Top. The Council is not expected to take action today because this is your first exposure to these draft standards. Questions can be addressed between now and our next meeting in May so that the Council might consider adoption of these standards.

In addition to adopting the standards, the Department must provide a description of how the DOE will roll out the new standards in ELA and Math to each district and ensure effective implementation. Additionally, they are expecting states to develop a professional development plan to direct teachers on implementation of the new standards. Another requirement of the RTTT application is Nevada's definition of "college readiness" adopted by the State Board of Education, which is on the agenda for May.

Assemblyman David Bobzien noted a concern for future revisions once the CCS is adopted.

Dr. Rheault answered that once each state has adopted the CCS it would be up to individual states to schedule further actions in the years ahead. He stated that he was reluctant once it was made clear that the CCS are now mandated as part of the RTTT application, because funding or no funding, the State is then liable to redevelop instructional materials and create professional development for implementation. Additionally, small rural districts that may have opted out of the RTTT will still have to incorporate the new standards since there can only be one set of standards for the State. On the other hand, there will be advantages since instructional materials and professional development will be done at a national level to become more economical and common for all states. Textbooks may become cheaper if developed online in addition to savings from online testing.

Member Sharon Beatty requested information about the deadline, specifically if we are on target.

Dr. Rheault replied that we are on time as of now, but another meeting in early May is essential for this Council to decide on the adoption of CCS. The Council is just the first step toward putting the ELA and Math CCS into regulation.

Member Laden questioned whether \$175M award would be enough for full implementation. He also questioned the textbook expenditures that are presently waived.

Dr. Rheault answered that \$175M would be the maximum distribution for Nevada. As for textbooks, the existing waiver is just for this current budget. We still have a line item in our budget for textbooks. The Department will look at textbooks again for the upcoming biennial budget. Previously, during our standard revision process, the Department never supplemented district budgets for the purchase of textbooks.

Chair Cegavske also registered concern, that if the CCS were implemented and we put new best practice programs in place, would there be money to continue and sustain those programs.

Dr. Rheault restated his concern on how to show sustainability when we are cutting back and reducing budgets next year. We know that we can sustain our data systems at this time. There is always a concern about future funding in this economic climate. There is no way to gage funding since we do not have direction for the new biennium budgets yet.

Member Allred questioned if Nevada does not win and the development of a national assessment is completed, in which Nevada has not contributed to the development and cost of it, do only winners get to participate.

Dr. Rheault informed the Council that there is a separate award for \$350M from the ARRA act, to support development of assessments relating to the use of CCS. An RFP will be going out shortly and companies/consortiums will have until June 1 to submit. The consortiums will open to all states regardless of their RTTT status. By using an assessment consortium, states could save a lot of money in not having to develop their own. There is a possibility of eventually eliminating our CRTs that are currently required, which cost our State several million dollars each budget. Then we could look at replacing HSPE, as we know it, and save more down the road.

Dr. Rheault stated that there would be questions about whether we want the Federal Government telling us what our tests should look like. That argument may be irrelevant since Nevada is already compared in National Assessment studies and they only use a sampling of 3,000 students from selected grades. It would be better for Nevada to be compared as a whole using all our students. Other advantages are more significant, the test would be validated at the national level since all states will be using the test. These newer consortiums are promoting online testing, which we currently do not have resources to put into place. It would also speed up the process for results.

Member Allred asked if the assessment would be for grades 3-12.

Dr. Rheault answered that assessments will remain as they are now with the CRT schedules.

Member Sayeski commented that anything that moves us away from High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), which is expensive to administer and score would be a nice long-term cost savings. Use of a common assessment should automatically place you in a college in your state.

Jill Derby spoke about her role as part of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task force on Education Reform (BRTF). She is part of the subcommittee on standards and assessments and everyone's priority is to work together with the DOE and other concerned partners. She continued that time is short, and there is a lot of work to be done. NDE staff are putting long hours into this application and timing is crucial. We

cannot let any part of a section slide. Every point is needed and that means that the CCS needs to be adopted as soon as possible.

3. Agenda Item No. 3 – Review of Common Core Standards Validation Process and Analysis compared to Nevada’s Current Standards –

Carol Crothers, Director of Office of Assessments, Accountability and Curriculum, for NDE introduced herself; her Assistant Director of Curriculum, Cindy Sharp; and NDE Math Consultant, David Brancamp.

Ms. Crothers informed the Council that she is leaving tomorrow to attend a meeting sponsored by the CCSSO on the assessment consortiums. From the advance information on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, this process of CCS and a balanced assessment tool would continue. Future interim assessments and formative assessments will be required that will hold equal importance to the end of year assessments. Showing that Nevada is committed to this type of reform will be necessary to continue our eligibility for \$8 million in USDOE federal funding we currently receive.

Ms. Crothers explained that NDE formed a task force for several meetings on CCS and the assessment tool that have had over 70 people in attendance, staff from all the districts and RPDP representatives plus teacher associations and higher education faculty, charter school and private school representation. Additionally, NDE staff has made comments in each of the public comment rounds on the CCS draft reviews. This task force is not just reviewing the CCS, but the comments and appendices that go along with the actual standards. Ms. Crothers continued explaining the spreadsheet that was handed out. She stated that she was very pleased that this RTTT process has inspired great collaboration and, as a result, NDE will maintain this much-needed collaboration in the future.

Ms. Sharp explained the alignment process in which the CCS content was matched against our current Nevada Standards. The most common finding is that CCS skills are introduced in earlier grades.

Ms. Sharp summarized that in the English Language Arts, her specialty area, the CCS matched well to our current standards. If there was any difference, CCS have higher rigor and are more curriculum based.

Mr. Brancamp stated the 6-7 middle school teachers loved the depth of the new CCS. Teachers in High School had concerns about the specificity of the CCS and the more rigorous skill sets they would have to incorporate.

Ms. Crothers stated that the task force recommended adopting CCS with no changes or additions.

Member Allred stated her concern about standards that we currently introduce in the grade 7 now being introduced in grade 4, made worse by a struggling school. She asked if that standard starting in grade 4 would be just an introduction or mastery.

Mr. Brancamp answered that they can be introduced in the grade 4 through building on associative process and language by working on whole numbers, rather than rationale theories, continuing to build in increments for higher grades.

Ms. Crothers stated that any consortium NDE looks at joining would involve teachers input as to when mastery will occur through incremental professional development. There will be access to resources and obtain goals we could not accomplish as a stand-alone state, but can accomplish with a consortium level of states

Member Crosby-Sturtz stated that as the mother of two young children, she was concerned that homework may be too challenging for children in struggling schools.

Ms Crothers explained that a concept can be introduced at a young age, without the complexities and detail until age appropriate, and then the concept is built out as they progress.

Member Laden asked if we are contemplating completely doing away with our current standards in ELA and Math, and replacing them with these new CCS, and, if so, how will the implementation and professional development for the teachers work. He would also like to hear from our higher education partners regarding their thought on the CCS, are they more challenging and will they lead to having more students being college ready.

Ms. Crothers explained that the task force, which included higher education staff, does have an expectation that this will be a complete replacement. Although the CCS includes all the core content of our current standards, the CCS does so in a more rigorous, robust way. She stated that she is encouraged by the rich conversations that staff, regional professional development staff and higher education have had with regard to rollout implementation of these standards. These conversations have just begun. The process will start with patterns and correlations between the grade coursework, and how that relates to college placement with the end result of better alignment and formative assessments. Higher education is already using our achievement data to tell us more regarding student preparation and remediation throughout K-12 in order to move that student beyond high school.

Member Beatty stated that while change is difficult and this Council knows how hard it has worked on our state standards, the CCS look to be more complimentary and encourage higher-level thinking. These new standards look like they will require more analysis and more Depth of Knowledge (DOK), which our previous standards are lacking in this process.

Member Beatty sees these as a simplification of what we have been striving to do, seek a higher level of understanding required to master the subjects, with fewer standards. Speaking as an administrator, she told the group that our teachers are overwhelmed by multiple benchmarks in the course of presenting and teaching mastery of a skill or concept. These CCS have richness and complexity. Member Beatty continued that having looked at the newest “Blueprint for Reform,” you can see that this is directly

where the USDOE is heading and future efforts will be evidence based. Having a consortium of states will free us economically.

Member Sayeski restated that he sees these CCS as an improvement of what we currently and will eventually produce reduced costs. If there were, a slight implementation dip that would still would be acceptable if we are heading in the right direction that of our students being better prepared for college or careers.

Carol Crothers informed the Council that Linda Darling-Hammond, who is a highly regarded teacher and writer on education issues and currently an advisor on Education for the Obama Administration, is passionate about assessments becoming more authentic and more performance based. We will not throw out multiple-choice tests, but deemphasize the multiple-choice concept for evaluating students.

Chair Cegavske asked if Dr. Rheault could give the Council the list of the experts who participated in the writing of these CCS.

Dr. Rheault stated that all of the CCS actual documents, comments, and appendices can be found at www.corestandards.org.

Bill Hanlon, Director of Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (PREP) went over a brief history of the last 30 yrs since the *Nation at Risk Report* in 1983. Per Mr. Hanlon, the various innovative types of programs have been tried, but failed to increase student achievement because most of those programs confuse activity with achievement. Now empowerment and charter schools are being touted as the best way to teach, but there is not a lot of a data to show that at this time. He also informed the Board that services from the RPDP is still voluntary for use by teachers, it is not mandated.

Chair Cegavske asked what body the RPDP's report to currently.

Mr. Hanlon answered that we have a 10 member State governing board authorized by statute. The Legislative Counsel Bureau and Legislative Committee on Education approve our RPDP plans, and then the fiscal committees approve expenditures. This frees up the RPDPs to deal direct with schools to address their particular needs.

Mr. Hanlon gave his opinion that all math standards should not be aimed at college entry level since all kids will not be going to college, if you have too many type of classes such as probability statistics and geometry it will be harder for a student to master the course. The way you achieve mastery is continually review the subject.

Member Sayeski asked Mr. Hanlon if he could give a percentage of kids who would be able to be college ready by using these new standards.

Mr. Hanlon answered that if he looked at a standard normal curve, 77% would meet them. For kids who cannot pass algebra that should not mean they cannot have high

school diploma. I think we under appreciate other bases of knowledge; some kids are not interested in college. They may want to go another route.

Chair Cegavske stated that it is clear that aligning the CCS and assessment has to go to go hand-in hand. This has been an issue for some years for Nevada.

Roseann Richards from SNRPDP wanted to comment on her experience as a part of the review team for the new ELA standards. The concept of incorporating reading, writing, and listening skills into all core subjects using the CCS, will help teachers to ensure their students become better readers and writers no matter the subject.

Ms. Derby asked to make a final comment. Beyond the possibility of obtaining, some serious money to help with education in Nevada, there is a lot of momentum for collaboration on this RTTT application. If we are not awarded the money, she still believes we have gained ground on our conversation about implementation of education reform.

Chair Cegavske mentioned that ACR2 is meeting soon and will be looking at governance structure and whether this Council should remain or go away.

Dr. Rheault stated that May 13 would be the last meeting for this interim Commission.

Discussion continued regarding the best days for a May meeting to adopt CCS.

Dr. Rheault stated that the BRTF would be in the final stages of putting the application together, the Council would have to anticipate the CCS be considered for full adoption.

Chair Cegavske asked what position the NSEA had taken on the CCS.

Craig Stevens spoke on behalf of the NSEA and stated that they have been partners with all aspects of the RTTT groups and that their only hope is with the speed necessary to fulfill this application we have to properly consider our educators.

The Chair asked if there were any comments from the public and thanked everyone for their attentiveness and reading.

6 Comments from Public

There were none.

7. Meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.