

FALL, 2007

# Member News



## Letter from the President

Welcome back to an already busy school year.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome, Mr. Randy Boggs, to our NQE Board. Randy currently works in the Clark County School District as an ECS. With his many years of experience in the classroom, he brings valuable insight to our Board. Randy succeeds Ms Carolyn Stone, who we thank for her efforts on the Board and her commitment to education in Nevada.

Monday, November 26, 2007 is the 4<sup>th</sup> annual NQE member meeting. It will be held at the Sahara West Library located at 9600 West Sahara Ave. All NQE members are invited to attend. If you have not joined you can do so on our website: [www.nevadansforqualityeducation.org](http://www.nevadansforqualityeducation.org)

Now that the 2007 legislative session is over, interim committees will be working and conducting hearings on issues important to our students. Included in this newsletter is interim committee information. Be sure to check our website to confirm committee dates and times. All hearings are bound by open meeting law. You are strongly encouraged to attend or watch live on line. Only with consistent parental involvement will the quality of education improve for all of Nevada's students.

May this be a positive year for our K-12 students.

Donna Hoffman-Anspach  
President

Phone: 702-648-1111

Fax: 702-255-1641

8665 W. Flamingo Rd.

Suite# 131-403

Las Vegas, Nevada  
89147

## Interim Legislative Committees

NQE will be monitoring several Legislative Committees during the interim. These committees will be working on education issues that will most likely be addressed in the Legislative Session 09.

### Interim Finance Committee

Senate: Raggio (Chair), Beers, Cegavske, Coffin, Mathews, Rhoads, Titus

Assembly: Arberry (Vice-Chair) Buckley, Denis, Gansert, Grady, Hardy, Hogan, Kovisto, Leslie, Marvel, McClain, Parks, Smith, Weber

### Legislative Committee on Education

Senate: Raggio (Vice-Chair), Cegavske, Mathews, Washington

Assembly: Parnell (Chair), Denis, Munford, Stewart

### Advisory Council on Parental Involvement

Senator Joyce Woodhouse

Assemblyman Ruben Kihuen

Non-Legislative Members: Barbara Clark, Thad Ballard, Rollins Stallworth, Mary Clair, Debi Millett, Darrin Rohr, Alison Turner, Patricia Lopez

### Commission on Educational Technology

Senator Michael Schneider

Assemblyman Mo Denis

Bob Bass, Las Vegas, Senate appointment

Jhone Ebert, Las Vegas, Assembly appointment

## **Interim Legislative Committees (continued)**

### **Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools (NRS 389.510)**

Senator Barbara Cegavske

Assemblyman David Bobzien

Non-Legislative Members: Steven Laden, Elaine Wynn, Kellie Crosby-Sturts, Evelyn Allred, Sharon Beatty, Benjamin Hart

### **P-16 Advisory Council**

**Created to assist in the coordination between elementary, secondary and higher education in the state.**

Senator Cegavske

Assemblywoman Barbara Buckley

Non-Legislative Members: Ray Bacon, Linda Johnson, Walt Rulfes, Steve Sisolak, Patty Wade, Bret Whipple, Julie Whitacre, Monte Miller, Maureen Peckman

Ex-Officio Members: Jim Rogers and Keith Rheault

### **Washoe County Schools Construction and Revitalization Advisory Committee**

Senators: Townsend and Mathews

Assemblywomen: Gansert and Smith

Additional Non-Legislative Members

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## **Nevada Public Education Foundation Expands Ready for Life® Initiative**

The Nevada Public Education Foundation (NPEF) is a non-profit intermediary organization and the statewide convener of *Ready for Life*®, a collaborative effort to improve Nevada's success at engaging and graduating "ready for life" students and re-engaging those who prematurely left school. For every 100 Nevada students that begin high school, 62 graduate in four years; 27 immediately enroll in an institute of higher education; 18 are still enrolled the following year; and only 10 complete a degree in four years. *Ready for Life* was established by NPEF as a collaborative process—not a program or specific intervention—in the belief that as public and private organizations partner together to meet the needs of youth, students will be more likely to succeed in school and transition to productive adulthood.

Since its launch in 2005, more than 100 local organizations have participated in the *Ready for Life* community collaborative in Clark County. NPEF recently provided funding to seed collaboratives in Churchill and Washoe Counties, and will be working with additional communities in the coming months. By convening *Ready for Life* collaboratives, providing funding to identify and address barriers to youth success, and facilitating communications, NPEF helps communities leverage resources and reduce duplication of efforts, to better serve young people.

As part of its statewide *Ready for Life* work, NPEF is currently completing an asset map of youth services available in Nevada. When complete, this online, searchable database will be an invaluable resource for young people and all those who work with or for them. NPEF also provides funding throughout Nevada for activities aligned with *Ready for Life*, including career and college access activities and innovative classroom programs.

For more information on *Ready for Life* and the Nevada Public Education Foundation, visit [www.readyforlifenv.org](http://www.readyforlifenv.org).

## News from Around the State

**Clark County School District:** Within the last year, the CCSD established 2 committees to improve communications and help develop solutions to educational issues. The **Superintendent's Education Network** (SEN) consists of representatives from businesses and civic organizations throughout Las Vegas. The **Parent Engagement Forum** (PEF) is comprised of parents representing each of the regions in the valley. PEF serves as an advisory and sounding board between parents and district staff. NQE was invited to sit on both of these important committees.

The Clark County School District is organizing a committee to evaluate teacher pay for performance, an issue the NQE Board of Directors has had great interest in. Thankfully, NQE has been invited to participate. The Board has researched several models throughout the US and has spoken to those actually implementing some type of performance model. We look forward to what may come from this committee and how it may improve student success. Committee meeting dates and times are not available at this point. Once again refer to our website for up-to-date information.

**Nye County School District:** Did you know: Nye County encompasses 18,400 square miles, operates a northern district in Tonopah and a southern district in Pahrump? The NCSO operates 100 buses with 82 daily routes traveling 1,062,510 miles per year, and in the last 12 years built 3 high schools, 1 middle school, 2 elementary schools and 1 tech center.

**Washoe County School District:** Students and educators marked the 220th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 2007. To commemorate Constitution Day, public schools and universities are directed by Congress to sponsor educational programs. Over 60 WCSO senior students from Reed H.S. and Sparks H.S. participated in the student forum. The Constitution: A Living Document at UNR. Attending this years Constitution Day event were Advanced Placement Government and We The People students from Reed and Sparks High Schools. Both UNR students and WCSO students sat on the student panel.

## NSEA Teachers Initiative

The Nevada State Education Association announced it has launched a movement to support a tax initiative that would raise the gaming tax by 3 percentage points. Their argument is that Nevada needs more money to improve education. NSEA President, Lynn Warne, stated the legislative process may be the best way to make tax policy, but in Nevada it's proven not to be true, therefore forcing the initiative process.

Recently, Governor Gibbons' recommended budget cuts were announced. Among the cuts was a request from the Governor that 5%, equaling \$64 million, be sliced from higher education. Given these current events, a tax debate has been reignited in the state.

## Testing, Testing, Testing

Dr. Keith Rheault, The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, attended a Community Linkage Meeting on October 16, 2007 sponsored by the Clark County School District.

Dr. Rheault answered questions ranging from the CRT (Criterion Reference Test), proficiency exams, to the amount of "tray time" in elementary schools. Questions were taken from the audience as others were submitted to The Board of Trustees prior to the meeting.

In 2004, NQE brought attention to the discrepancy in the CRT testing schedules for 9 and 12 month schools. The year round schools administered the test thirty plus days later than their 9 month counterparts. As expected, the scores were significantly higher for those taking the test later.

A committee was created to look at testing calendars for all 17 school districts in order to make the testing time frame uniformed. The outcome was to administer the test at 120 days of instruction plus or minus 10 days.

While the time frame is aligned throughout the state, we are still concerned that the test is based on 180 days of instruction. There are 60 days of instruction the children have not received, yet they are expected to possess the knowledge. We believe the test is NOT a true measurement. The CRT is a high stakes test. Not only are schools identified as being successful or not, the results are submitted to the federal government in order to comply with NCLB.

Although this concern was posed by several people at the meeting, Dr. Rheault was not able to offer a solution.

More information on the Community Linkage Meeting discussion will be available on the NQE website.

## Cell Phone Policies

The proliferation of cellular phones and anxiety after the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado and the terrorist attacks on September 11 are causing some school systems across the country to reevaluate their policies on the devices.

Some states completely ban cellular phones on school campuses while others are looking to impose further restrictions on use. New York City Schools continue to officially prohibit cell phone use for their 1.1 million student population even though Chancellor Harold O. Levy reviewed the policy after the attacks. Meanwhile, Maryland and Virginia lifted bans.

School districts recognize there are valid reasons for students to possess cell phones and that parents want them for safety's sake. But the device's association with drug dealers, capability of cheating on tests, circulation of inappropriate photos, ringing & beeping distractions, loss of instructional time due to disruptions and the possibility of overloading phone systems severely limiting emergency communication are causing further restrictions to be placed on cell phone policies.

The National School Safety and Security Services (NSSSS), a consulting firm that focuses on school safety and crisis preparedness, opposes allowing students to carry cell phones and pagers. They believe the abuses and disruptions outweigh the advantages.

Technological advances and concerns over school safety will contribute to the controversy over cell phone usage on campuses. It will be interesting to watch the developments across the country and here in Nevada.

## Nevada's 2007 NAEP Results Released

### Improvements Made in Several Key Areas

Dr. Keith Rheault, Superintendent of Public Instruction, released the results of the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in Nevada. NAEP was administered to 4th and 8th grade students in the subjects of reading and mathematics. Although there was a 70% increase in students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) from the previous comparable NAEP administration, impressive gains were made for several student groups, particularly in 4th grade reading and mathematics. Dr. Rheault is quoted as saying, "Despite the educational barriers faced by Nevada's students, there have been significant improvements in performance in part due to the school improvement funding provided by the Nevada Legislature and educational programs such as Reading First and the Nevada Early Literacy Intervention Program." For more information and to read the full news release, <http://www.doe.nv.gov>

## 4th Annual NQE Meeting - November 26, 2007

All NQE members are encouraged to attend NQE's fourth annual member meeting. It will be held at the Sahara West Library located at 9600 West Sahara Ave at 7:30 pm.

If you are not a member of NQE, please give serious consideration to joining. We cannot do the work we do without your support. Because we are a "grassroots" organization, funding is so important and necessary to our activities. For too long, parents and others in the community have been silent about improving the quality of Nevada's K-12 educational experience. We all must continue to stay informed and proactive in our children's education.

**JUST DO IT -- JOIN NQE TODAY!**