

EDUCATION INITIATIVES FOR THE NEW NEVADA

Governor Sandoval's Recommended Budget: 2015-17 Biennium

Governor Sandoval has proposed a plan to modernize Nevada's PreK-12 education system. Saying that "we live in a state that is transforming before our eyes," the Governor recommends significant investments in our schools. These programs will serve the full spectrum of grades and the diverse needs of students and educators. A partial list of the Governor's key investment proposals is included below; full details are available at <http://budget.nv.gov/StateBudget/Upcoming/>.

EARLY LEARNERS

FUND PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT MATCH \$10 MILLION

The recent federal grant to expand quality and access in preschool services in identified high need communities (Churchill, Clark, Lyon, Nye, and Washoe) includes a match requirement. The grant will double the number of students at risk being served and provide access to full-day programs with quality control. For the biennium, the State match equals just over \$10 million. Federal dollars received during the first year of this grant total \$6.4 million (\$43 million over four years).

EXPAND FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN \$85 MILLION

Completes the expansion of Full Day Kindergarten, reaching all schools by the second year of the biennium, including class-size reduction funding at 21:1. Also includes money for portables where space is not available. This represents a total investment of approximately \$85 million over the biennium.

READ BY GRADE THREE \$27.2 MILLION

State General Fund of \$4.9 million in FY 2016 and \$22.3 million in FY 2017 to support activities found to be effective in improving the academic achievement of students in reading in grades Kindergarten through third grade (e.g., literacy coaches, grants, contracts, etc.). The Department will establish a grant program to augment reading proficiency programs in schools (district and charter) not served with Zoom or Victory reading centers/programs. Literacy plans with performance measures will be required from elementary schools that apply; the State Literacy Plan will provide a foundation. A policy bill will be introduced in the Senate to refine and carry out the provisions of the appropriation.

MODERNIZING THE NEVADA PLAN

ADD SPECIAL EDUCATION WEIGHTS \$25 MILLION

In the second year of the biennium, special education units will be converted to an equivalent per pupil "weighted" formula. This will begin an increase in weighted formula funding over each year of subsequent biennial budgets until the desired weight (estimated to be twice the basic per pupil guarantee) is achieved, as recommended by the SB 500 Task Force during the recent Interim Study. An additional \$25 million is appropriated to fund this expansion in the second year.

ESTABLISH SPECIAL EDUCATION CONTINGENCY ACCOUNT \$5 MILLION

A State General Fund appropriation of \$5 million in the second year of the biennium will be placed in a new account to reimburse districts and charter schools for extraordinary expenses related to the education of students with disabilities. In the first year of the biennium, the Department will establish regulations concerning the reimbursement qualifications and procedures; the State Board will review and approve.

EXPAND ZOOM SCHOOLS PROGRAM

\$50 MILLION

Appropriates additional State General Fund of \$25 million in each year of the biennium. This will fund twice the number of current schools in Clark and Washoe (24 additional) in the first year of the biennium. When kindergarten becomes fully funded (outlined above), Zoom funds will be freed up and used to expand to additional schools. Middle and high schools should be included in this biennium’s pilot. The pilot will be evaluated by an external evaluator, contracted for by the NDE, and spending information will be used to modernize the Nevada Plan next biennium by shifting to funding “weights” as recommended by the SB 500 Task Force.

CREATE A VICTORY SCHOOLS PROGRAM

\$50 MILLION

Appropriates \$25 million in the State General Fund in each year of the biennium to create a new Victory Schools Program. The funding will be allocated by the Department to underperforming schools (lowest student achievement levels) in the 20 poorest zip codes in the state. Specific services will be required, especially in the areas of wrap-around and family engagement. This program will be implemented in a similar fashion to the Zoom Schools Program. The Department will identify all schools throughout the state; schools will be managed by the local district under the conditions of a submitted plan and grant award. The pilot program will be evaluated by an external evaluator, and spending information will be used to modernize the Nevada Plan with “weights” in future years.

FUND GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

\$10 MILLION

Increases the state program by \$10 million over the biennium to assist districts in educating students who qualify for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs. Only students who have been identified through State-approved assessment/processes are eligible. Funds will be distributed on a per pupil basis based on a count day(s) reporting mechanism to be established by the Department. Calculations for future “weights” will be determined through this pilot program. Current State spending on GATE is less than \$200,000/year.

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL

NEVADA READY 21 TECHNOLOGY GRANTS

\$48.4 MILLION

State General Fund of \$23.2 million in each fiscal year to implement Nevada Ready 21 Technology Grant Program. This program is a One-to-One Program (see attached proposal). This is a 6-year program, whereby Middle School will be the focus for the first three years and High School will follow. Funding will be distributed via the Commission on Educational Technology in order to build whole-school capacity for instructional technology. The Commission’s Nevada Ready 21 plan calls for every student to have access to the two most important educational opportunities available: (1) skilled educators who value connected, personalized, student-centered learning, and (2) continuous access to a personal, portable device that is connected wirelessly to the Internet. There is additional funding for Wide Area Network incentives and staffing to manage the program.

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) EXPANSION

\$8 MILLION

State General Fund of \$4.0 million in each fiscal year to augment existing budget line item from Agency Request to GOVREC. The funding will be utilized to expand programs identified by workforce sector councils.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS GRANTS

\$8 MILLION

State General Fund of \$8 million over the biennium for College and Career Readiness Grants. The Department will create a new category of school aid for high schools to offer innovative programs targeted to improve the graduation rate and readiness upon exit. This expands existing work (e.g., access to dual credit courses) and is tied to the administration of the new 11th grade College and Career Readiness assessment (ACT) that will give schools information on students' readiness for post-secondary education or employment. Competitive grants would be awarded to the school districts and charter schools.

JOBS FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES (JAG) EXPANSION

\$4.6 MILLION

State General Fund increase of \$4.6 million over the biennium (up from \$1.5 million in the current budget) to support expansion of JAG to 50 schools throughout the state. JAG is a dropout prevention and career readiness program with a national track record of success.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

\$1.2 MILLION

The Department's request includes \$1.2 million over the biennium to expand student participation in Advanced Placement courses through additional teacher preparation and targeted grants to improve participation and passage rates among key population groups.

INVESTING IN CHANGE

GREAT TEACHING AND LEADING FUND

\$9.8 MILLION

Create a new fund in the General Fund for the Department to incentivize professional development and improvements to the educator pipeline. In the first year, the focus will be full implementation of the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF), new science standards, teacher recruitment and training, and leadership training and development. After the first year, the State Board will coordinate activities by establishing annual criteria for the Fund, to include Regional Professional Development Programs. Entities which can receive the grants include the RPDPs, school districts, higher education institutions, employee associations, and nonprofit organizations. Almost \$10 million of new funding is provided over the biennium.

SOCIAL WORKER GRANTS

SAFE AND RESPECTFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

\$36.2 MILLION

Appropriates \$11.9 million in FY 2016 and \$24.3 million in FY 2017 to create a new grant program for schools to provide a social worker or other licensed mental health worker. Includes a mental health screening survey, to be administered in the first year in order to identify schools in need. This program will operate as a block grant to local districts based on identified needs. It also includes State General Fund of \$300,000 in each fiscal year to create a new Safe and Respectful Learning Environment Office in the Department. The Director will report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS TURNAROUND

\$10 MILLION

State General Fund of \$5.0 million in each fiscal year to assist in turning around persistently underperforming schools. Currently, the only funding for such schools is provided by the federal government. These funds will be used for vendor contracts, performance management assessment, staff incentives, and other services targeting student achievement in the lowest performing schools. The funds will provide a path to success before takeover of these schools (and placement in the proposed Achievement District) becomes necessary.

CHARTER SCHOOL HARBOR MASTER

\$20 MILLION

State General Fund of \$10 million in each fiscal year of the biennium will be utilized to match private philanthropy in establishing a fund to recruit best-in-class national charter management organizations to Nevada and help develop local human capital. Funds could be used to augment basic per pupil guarantee requirements for no more than two years and to provide access to construction capital or facilities. These funds will be a direct distribution to an established 501(c)(3) organization once each year upon proof of the match.