

iNVEST

2013



10 years...

AGO

LATER

FROM NOW

Ten years ago, nobody was “liking” anyone on Facebook. Ten years ago, nobody was “tweeting” on Twitter. Ten years ago, iPads didn’t exist, and neither did “smart” phones. But because ten years ago someone was thinking about Facebook and Twitter and iPads and “smart” phones, today they are household names, tools readily available across the spectrum. Somebody was thinking, somebody was asking important questions, and somebody was taking action. That was ten years ago.



Ten years ago in Nevada, education leaders were asking the question: “What will it take to improve student achievement in our schools?” Ten years ago these leaders were intently focused on improving the educational achievement of every kind of student in every kind of classroom in every kind of school across the State. And ten years ago, these leaders answered their own question by providing a comprehensive plan to improve student achievement throughout the Silver State. That plan was called *iNVEST*, and it was introduced to legislators, elected officials, key stakeholders, and anyone and everyone who would listen to what Nevada’s education leaders knew needed to be done to improve student achievement in Nevada. That was ten years ago.

That plan was called *iNVEST*, and it was introduced to legislators, elected officials, key stakeholders, and anyone and everyone who would listen to what Nevada’s education leaders knew needed to be done to improve student achievement in Nevada. That was ten years ago.

Demographics			
	Most Recent Data	Previous Period	Earliest iNVEST Data
Demographics¹			
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2002-2003
Total Number of Students	439,277	437,057	369,498
American Indian/Alaskan Native	5,025	5,365	6,323
Asian	24,796	26,324	23,519
Hispanic	174,033	169,510	106,456
Black	42,347	43,085	38,776
White	164,378	169,128	194,834
Pacific Islander	5,516	4,683	N/A
Multi-Race	23,182	18,962	N/A
Special Populations¹			
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2003-2004
Students with Disabilities	47,261	47,195	42,543
Percent of all Students ²	10.8%	10.8%	11.1%
Limited English Proficiency	69,800	87,240	64,181
Percent of all Students ²	15.9%	20.0%	16.7%
Free and Reduced Lunch	226,647	209,503	132,129
Percent of all Students ²	51.6%	47.9%	34.4%
Migrant	122	96	490
Percent of all Students ²	0.03%	0.02%	0.13%

¹ Nevada Report Card and Department of Education

² Calculated

N/A- Not a category during the 2002-2003 school year



2013 marks the ten-year anniversary of *iNVEST*, the blueprint for changing the face of education in the State of Nevada. Some things have changed over the past ten years, others have not. In the wake of the worst recession in Nevada’s modern history, our schools continue to receive some of the lowest per pupil funding levels in the nation even while class sizes continue to rise, student demographics pose ever increasing challenges, innovative education programs have been cut, and school capital budgets have been depleted.

Ten years ago, in 2003, the superintendents and school board members of Nevada’s 17 school districts banded together to collectively answer the question, “What is needed to improve student achievement in Nevada?” Ten years later, Nevada’s school superintendents find themselves posing the same question, and – to a large degree – responding with the same answers provided a decade ago. The primary tenets of the original *iNVEST* document still ring true today:

- ▶ **Districts must have adequate basic support and previous budget reductions should be restored;**
- ▶ **Districts must have the capacity to attract and retain an effective work force;**
- ▶ **Instructional time and educational opportunities for students must be increased.**

Ten years later, students who were entering kindergarten when *iNVEST* was introduced are now preparing to exit high school. These students face more rigorous standards than ever before, they need to have more competitive skills than ever before, and they face a reality that is far more challenging than ever before. Have we done right by them? And ten years from now, will the authors of *iNVEST* continue to ask the same questions, still seeking the same answers?



It is important that the Nevada State Legislature and other stakeholders understand, and accept responsibility for, the realities of the State’s chosen path for public education. It is also important they understand that Nevada’s school districts have a well-defined plan to improve the quality of instruction, increase the competitiveness of students and deliver on the promise that every Nevada child deserves a quality education.

A 10-YEAR LOOK BACK

Being that this is the tenth year for *iNVEST*, 2013 provides a good opportunity to show how the educational environment has changed during the past decade. We have collected data from a number of sources including, without limitation, the Nevada Department of Education, the National Center for Education Statistics and the United States Census. The following is a general summary of our findings during this data gathering process.

- ▶ **Student population growth has outstripped growth in the number of teachers.** Between 2002 and 2010, Nevada's population grew by 23.5 percent. During the same period, the number of children in classrooms increased by 18.3 percent. Notably, however, the number of teachers has grown by a slower clip, expanding by only 16.1 percent. The result is higher class sizes, which have increased from 18.4 students per teacher to 20.0 students per teacher.



- ▶ **Nevada continues to lag the nation in terms of K-12 education funding.** The latest data available suggests Nevada spent \$4.9 billion on public education programs during the 2008-2009 school year (latest comparative data available). While this amount is approximately 30 percent higher than the \$3.8 total reported during the 2002-2003 school year, Nevada's per pupil spending has actually fallen from 86.3 percent of the national average to 84.6 percent of the national average during that same period. Simply stated, Nevada schools are facing larger problems with comparably fewer resources.

- ▶ **Among the most significant changes in Nevada's school funding is a reduction in the amount of the school budget dedicated to capital outlays.** In 2002, this figure was 53.8 percent of the national average. The latest data available indicate a figure only 8.4 percent higher than the national. Notably, in 2012, Nevada was the 6th fastest growing state in the country, reporting a growth rate roughly twice the national average.

- ▶ **Decreases in capital outlays per student have not resulted in a significant shift of spending into classroom operations.** Nevada schools allocated approximately \$7,876 for operations in 2010-2011 (latest data available). While slightly higher than the \$7,768 reported for the 2002-2003 school year, total spending remains well below national averages. Notably, Nevada's per pupil operations spending fell 12.1 percent between the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school





years. When comparable statistics are released nationally, it is expected that the Nevada’s comparative spending ratio will have fallen even further.

- ▶ **The demographics of the student population have become increasingly complex.** The total number of students in the free and reduced lunch program increased, from 132,129 in 2003 to 226,647 in 2011, or from 34.4 percent of all students to 51.6 percent of all students. During the same time, the number of students with disabilities increased from 42,543 to 47,261, and the number of limited English proficiency students increased from 64,181 to 69,800.
- ▶ **Student achievement measures have been mixed.** In spite of the demographic challenge, National Assessment of Educational Progress (N.A.E.P.) scores steadily increased for every category and grade level during the past decade. This improvement in standardized testing notwithstanding, graduation rates decreased from 74.8 percent for the class of 2004 to 68.8 percent for the class of 2012, results that correlate to the addition of the science portion of the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam combined with increased rigor of the exam. Conversely, dropout rates from the same period decreased from 6.0 percent to 4.1 percent (dropout rates measures each year on average how many students drop out of high school from all grades, whereas graduation rates track the same class over four years). Average SAT and ACT scores for Nevada’s college bound seniors remained relatively consistent during the same period.

A 10-YEAR LOOK FORWARD

It is critical that Nevada’s superintendents collectively provide a plan that will produce a measurable change in school performance and student achievement. We believe that the strategies outlined below reflect the key elements of that plan.



DISTRICTS MUST HAVE ADEQUATE BASIC SUPPORT AND PREVIOUS BUDGET REDUCTIONS SHOULD BE RESTORED.

- ▶ **Ensure education dollars stay in education programs.**

In current state budget practice, if education revenue sources within the Distributive School Account (DSA) generate more revenue than is projected during the biennium, those additional revenues are reverted to the state's general fund. These reversions are then used for whatever purpose state legislators deem

appropriate and are often used to support programs other than education. Sadly, this practice undermines the stability of education funding and, over time, erodes public confidence in the State’s commitment to its students.

We believe this current budgeting practice is outdated. Accordingly, moving forward, we recommend that these “reversion” funds remain in an education rainy day fund until such time as they accumulate to 10 percent of the annual DSA revenues. From that point forward, the DSA reversions over the 10 percent threshold should be allocated to Nevada’s school districts on a per pupil basis to be used for non-recurring expenditures such as capital, professional development, and equipment purchases.

School Data			
	Most Recent Data	Previous Period	Earliest iNVEST Data
School Information¹			
	2010-2011	2009-2010	2002-2003
Total Number of Districts	17	17	17
Total Number of Schools	626	620	517
High Schools	85	84	79
Junior/Middle Schools	107	106	79
Public Charter Schools-Secondary & Junior	18	19	7
Elementary Schools	367	362	318
Special Schools	27	27	28
Public Charter Schools-Elementary	14	14	6
K-12 Schools	8	8	0
Students and Teachers Information			
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2002-2003
Total Number of Students ²	439,277	437,057	369,498 ¹
	2010-2011	2009-2010	2002-2003
Total Number of FTE Teachers ³	21,839	22,025	18,805
Student/Teacher Ratio ³	20.02	19.41	18.40
Computers²			
	2010-2011	2009-2010	2003-2004
Total Number of Computers	146,820	128,688	52,195

¹ Nevada Department of Education

² Nevada Report Card

³ National Center for Educational Statistics CCD Build-A-Table

As another example of the undermining and erosion that occurs in State education funding, in 2009, Initiative Petition 1 (IP 1) sought to increase room taxes in Clark and Washoe Counties by 3 percentage points not to exceed 13 percent to enhance education programs. Room taxes were increased, however, during the 2009-11 biennium, these funds were deposited directly into the State's general fund to balance the State's budget. And during the 2011-13 biennium, they were deposited in the Distributive School Account and used as a direct offset to state general fund education spending. In short, these revenues generated under the banner of education have never been used for their intended purpose. These



dollars should be separated from the DSA and other education funding, as originally intended. Also as intended, they should be used to increase teacher salaries and to enhance education programs including, without limitation, programs that would restore teaching positions where they have been eliminated due to budget cuts.

If all dollars that are presented to taxpayers as funding education are actually spent in education, Nevada would go a long way toward meeting the needs of our students and restoring the public’s trust in the State’s commitment to public education excellence for every student.

▶ **Restore lost teaching positions to stabilize class-sizes**

As a result of budget cuts in 2011, Nevada school districts lost hundreds of positions. In fact, over the last biennium, Nevada school districts across the State have eliminated 1,144 licensed positions due to lack of funding. Many teaching positions have been moved from school district general fund budgets to federal funding sources – a temporary “solution” that puts these positions in danger of being completely eliminated as the federal government considers sequestration cuts.

The accumulation of cuts since the Great Recession began in 2008 is taking its toll on our students. In Clark County alone, since 2008, there has been a reduction of 3,400 full time equivalents to the general operating fund – more than two-thirds of which were teachers who directly interacted with students. Class sizes have increased to the largest levels in the history of the District, further impacting the ability to ensure instruction meets the needs of every student in the classroom. Ensuring every student has the opportunity to conduct a lab experiment or providing differentiated instruction to students learning at a different pace becomes challenging – if not impossible – the larger the class size becomes. Classroom management becomes more arduous the larger the class size and the more crowded the physical space becomes. Additionally, as our nation considers student safety in the wake of recent tragedies, the number of students in a single classroom must now be considered in terms of both safety and instruction. At current class size even the best teachers can become ineffective.

▶ **Provide adequate and equitable funding for all Nevada public schools**

The Nevada Plan, adopted by the Legislature in 1967, was designed to provide an equal educational opportunity for every child regardless of where they lived in the State. The basic tenets of the Plan have remained intact for the past 45 years despite the fact the State has changed dramatically during that time. Nevada is no longer a predominately rural, homogeneous state, but one of great diversity. In 2010-2011, 20 percent of the students in the State were English language learners with over 150 languages spoken in Nevada’s schools. In addition, in 2011-2012, 51.6 percent of the students were enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program, which placed them at the federal poverty level. Although some of the basic tenets of the Nevada Plan are sound, it lacks support for individual stu-

dent needs and characteristics. Educators throughout the State – and throughout the nation - recognize that it takes more resources to educate certain populations.

In 2006, the Nevada Legislature commissioned a study to look at the *adequacy* of funding for K-12 schools. The Augenblick study focused on the base cost to educate a student and weighted cost for special populations. The study showed that funding for Nevada’s schools was *inadequate*. In 2012, the Legislature commissioned the American Institutes for Research to do an *equity* study which showed that the Nevada Plan has *inequities* in it that have arisen as the demographics in the State have changed.

School Funding			
	Most Recent Data	Previous Period	Earliest iNVEST Data
Total Spending Information*¹			
	2008-2009	2007-2008	2002-2003
NV Spending (Millions \$)	4,870	4,777	3,759
Nevada Total Per Pupil Spending (\$)	11,237	11,125	10,173
US Spending (Millions \$)	653,130	637,156	567,677
US Total Per Pupil Spending (\$)	13,257	12,927	11,782
Nevada Total Spending Per Pupil as a % of US Total Spending Per Pupil	84.8%	86.1%	86.3%
Operations Spending By Category Per Student*²			
	2010-2011	2009-2010	2002-2003
NV Total Per Student (\$)	7,876	8,965	7,768
Instruction (\$)	5,205	5,392	3,801
Instruction Support (\$)	876	975	1,842
Operations and Maintenance (\$)	1,208	1,923	1,565
Leadership (\$)	588	677	560
	2008-2009	2007-2008	2002-2003
US Total Per Student ¹ (\$)	11,272	10,970	10,038
Nevada Ops. Spending Per Pupil as a % of US Ops. Spending Per Pupil	80.3%	75.3%	77.4%
Capital Spending Information*¹			
	2008-2009	2007-2008	2002-2003
NV Total Capital Outlay (Millions \$)	678	741	720
NV Capital Outlay Per Student (\$)	1,552	1,712	1,949
US Total Capital Outlay (Millions \$)	70,511	70,857	61,073
US Capital Outlay Per Student (\$)	1,431	1,438	1,268
Nevada Capital Spending Per Pupil as a % of US Capital Spending Per Pupil	108.4%	119.1%	153.8%

* Inflation-adjusted to 2012 dollars

¹ National Center for Educational Statistics CCD Build-A-Table, Calculations

² Nevada Report Card

► **Develop a long-term, sustainable capital plan for all school districts.**

The physical environment in which we teach children can have a profound impact on their success as a student. Public schools are community investments paid for with taxpayer funds, and while districts use the buildings to educate students,

Funding Per Pupil By District*^{1†}			
	Most Recent Data	Previous Period	Earliest iNVEST Data
	2010-2011	2009-2010	2003-2004
State	7,876	8,965	7,316
Carson	9,176	9,399	7,884
Churchill	8,627	9,090	8,875
Clark	7,558	8,167	6,994
Douglas	9,177	9,260	9,042
Elko	9,677	10,369	9,103
Esmeralda	30,714	26,806	0
Eureka	28,959	25,993	23,352
Humboldt	9,192	9,288	9,195
Lander	9,462	10,100	8,805
Lincoln	12,364	11,716	11,893
Lyon	9,092	9,279	8,792
Mineral	15,719	12,880	11,755
Nye	9,736	10,341	9,861
Pershing	13,629	13,390	12,468
Storey	13,397	13,751	12,338
Washoe	8,158	8,493	7,138
White Pine	10,291	10,410	9,744

* Inflation-adjusted to 2012 dollars

¹ Nevada Report Card, Calculated

[†] Per-Pupil expenditures before the 2009-2010 school year were calculated using a different formula. The data are provided merely to show that district-level differences have existed for many years and not for comparisons across periods

these facilities belong to everyone. Just like home ownership, public investments need to be maintained and equipped to provide a safe and effective learning environment in which children can focus on preparing for the 21st century workplace. The community has invested millions of dollars to construct these buildings, however insufficient resources have been allocated to maintain aging school facilities in our state.

Since school districts are statutorily prohibited from raising public funds to pay for maintaining facilities, schools in need of essential repairs are in danger of creating more harm than good for the students in Nevada. Years of deferred maintenance now require the replacement of major systems in a growing number of schools throughout the State. Without adequate funding for the maintenance and modernization of school facilities, districts will be forced to raid razor-thin operating budgets in order to pay for repairs to plumbing, electrical, and HVAC systems as they arise, or be forced to close down schools and bus children to other (potentially overcrowded) buildings.



In addition to the student safety concerns related to large class sizes mentioned previously, the physical design of many Nevada schools lend themselves to an insecure environment for our students and staff. Schools that were built decades ago with stand-alone wings and classrooms that open directly to outdoor corridors provide easy access to anyone who is on the property. These designs are inherently difficult to secure, because once an intruder has jumped a fence or found other access to the property, there are no other obstacles or control points between the intruder and the children. Additionally, many of our schools have classroom doors that must be locked from the outside, an impractical arrangement in the case of an active shooter on campus, or a number of other scenarios with potential danger for our students and employees.

Additionally, the technology required to deliver today's curriculum to the digital natives now in our schools necessitates a significant investment in infrastructure. As the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are implemented, many of the aligned assessments will be web-based and require additional wiring, bandwidth, and capacity. It is, at best, a frustrating irony that we are earnestly trying to prepare students for a 21st century workplace in a 20th century environment. As a result, far too often our students leave our buildings not college and career ready because we cannot train them in – or with - the modern tools of today's industries.

For these reasons, we recommend that legislators support legislation to implement additional funding mechanisms that are dedicated to school facilities based on individual county needs for maintenance and modernization of facilities, safety improvements, and technology upgrades. Many counties are confined by the property tax cap imposed by state law in 2005 and none of the districts have the ability to raise revenue for this necessary investment, without which these taxpayer-owned buildings will continue to deteriorate and create significant liabilities in the future.

DISTRICTS MUST HAVE THE CAPACITY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN AN EFFECTIVE WORK FORCE

- ▶ **Implement educational reforms now in statute; ensure fair and effective evaluation systems by providing quality professional development for administrators**

With the effective educational reforms enacted during the 2011 legislative session, educators have the necessary tools in place to ensure every classroom has an effective educator. In order to fairly and fully implement these reforms, the work of the Teachers and Leaders Council must be fully utilized. As new evaluation systems are put in place, administrators must be trained to develop evaluation skills that are critical to ensuring quality teachers remain in the classroom.

- ▶ **Provide effective professional development for teachers as they fully transition to the new Common Core Standards and are evaluated under a different system.**



As we reach the critical juncture of implementing the new Common Core State Standards at the same time we are transitioning to high-stakes evaluations, teachers also need to receive effective and ongoing professional development. While both facets of reform are essential, we run the risk of losing effective educators if we do not ensure appropriate training takes place during the transition.

▶ **Eliminate non-essential reports and mandates to allow administrators to focus on students and the professional development of their staff**

The primary mission of educators at any level is to ensure students achieve, yet too many of our most effective educators are often overwhelmed with other duties unrelated to their primary mission. In the 2011 session, Washoe County School District sponsored SB 365, which outlined a long list of requirements and reports superintendents are required to provide on a regular basis. Many are outdated and duplicative, and all take time away from the primary mission of ensuring students achieve. While it is essential that educators are accountable and provide timely information related to student achievement and a myriad of other details related to operations, it is also important that we don't bury educators in paperwork that detracts from their true responsibilities. From requirements to report the BMI of every student to outdated reports stemming from the requirements of *No Child Left Behind*, superintendents will once again bring forth measures that ought to be eliminated to allow educators to focus on the core mission of improving student achievement.

▶ **Fund "pay-for-performance" programs based on the evaluation system developed by the Teachers and Leaders Council.**

Although pay-for-performance measures have been discussed for years, it has been difficult to find measures that all parties could agree upon when discussing how extraordinary performance could be measured and rewarded. With significant participants gathered around the table, the Teachers and Leaders Council is developing evaluation models that should be implemented and used as the basis of pay-for-performance programs. It is important to note that much attention has been paid to ensuring inadequate teachers are identified and helped – helped either to become effective or helped to find other professions – but little has been done to recognize and reward outstanding teachers who are making a difference in the lives of our students. We must ensure we keep our best and brightest teachers in the classroom by providing a professional pathway that makes it desirable for them to do so.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS MUST BE INCREASED.

▶ **Directly address student demographic challenges by aggressively targeting students with limited English proficiency**

As the number of students whose first language is not English continues to rise in Nevada, we must provide resources to quickly identify the assistance they need and then provide targeted instruction to meet those objectives. Some students

simply need to learn English or improve their mastery of the language, while other students have arrived in our classrooms who not only don't speak English, but also are not at grade level in their native language. Our expectations for these students are the same as expectations for other students, but to have them read at grade level by third grade and to graduate on time will require additional time and resources to achieve. Studies show that once these students acquire English proficiency, they often out-perform their peers, making it imperative we help our English language learners reach their potential.

Performance			
	Most Recent Data	Previous Period	Earliest iNVEST Data
Graduation and Dropout Rates¹			
	2010-2011	2009-2010	2002-2003
Graduation Rates	68.8%	70.3%	74.8%
Dropout Rates	4.1%	4.2%	6.0%
SAT Scores²			
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2002-2003
Critical Reading	496	497	507
Mathematics	514	514	519
Writing	488	489	N.A.
ACT Scores³			
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2003-2004
Composite Score	21.3	21.4	21.2
English	20.5	20.7	20.4
Mathematics	21.4	21.4	21.1
Reading	21.6	21.8	21.8
Science	21.1	21.3	21.1
% Taking ACT	34%	31%	33%
4th Grade N.A.E.P.* Scores⁴			
	2010-2011	2008-2009	2002-2003
Math	237	235	228
Reading	213	211	207
Science	141	N.A.	N.A.
Writing	145	N.A.	N.A.
8th Grade N.A.E.P.* Scores⁴			
	2010-2011	2008-2009	2002-2003
Math	278	274	268
Reading	258	254	252
Science	144	141	N.A.
	2006-2007	2001-2002	2001-2002
Writing**	143	137	137

* National Assessment of Educational Progress

** 8th Grade Writing Test only administered for 2006-2007 and 2001-2002 years

N.A.-Not Administered

¹ Nevada Report Card

² College Board

³ ACT

⁴ National Center for Educational Statistics CCD Build-A-Table

▶ **Reduce class size to optimum sizes, particularly for students who are struggling.**

Although Nevada statutes require class sizes of 1:15 in first and second grade and 1:19 in third grade, as districts have dealt with budget cuts, they have unfortunately resorted to seeking waivers and increasing class sizes simply to make ends meet. Kindergarten does not fall under statutory requirements, resulting in class sizes that often approach 25 to 30 students. Expectations of kindergarten have changed from a place where students learn to line up, take turns, and sing songs to a classroom where students learn basic reading, writing, and math skills. Class sizes in this fundamental grade must be addressed, as must the class sizes of grades 4-12. When some hear of the need to reduce class size, they may think of studies that show optimal class sizes should be fewer than 20 students. However, most of Nevada’s schools are operating with class sizes significantly higher than that. In Clark County, for example, current student/teacher ratios are funded 34:1 for elementary and 38:1 for secondary schools; the highest class sizes found in the recorded history of the District. Getting class sizes back to reasonable levels must be a top priority.

▶ **Ensure student proficiency by the end of the third grade through early identification of struggling students and effective early interventions**

Students who will have difficulty in reading at grade level in the third grade can be identified as early as the first week of kindergarten. Early identification is essential so students who have begun school significantly behind their peers can receive individualized attention and additional instruction to catch up before it becomes too late. Without resources to identify and assist these students, requirements to retain students in the third grade until they are proficient will simply result in very large third grade classes with students who may have lost confidence in their ability to learn. Resources for early identification and intervention will help us ensure third grade students are proficient not just in reading, but in other core areas, as well.

▶ **Invest in early childhood development, including access to full-day kindergarten for all students**

Early childhood represents a critical developmental period that determines the future success of a student. Particularly for children living in poverty and for students facing other significant challenges, including language development, attending pre-school and kindergarten will provide long-lasting benefits that will influence the long-term success of the student. As educators strive to reach expectations such as having all students proficient by third grade, full-day kindergarten

is essential. As we continue to raise academic expectations through the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, providing enough time on task is crucial, especially in the early years. Effective early childhood programs will reduce the number of students enrolled in special educa-



tion programs, reduce the number of students who have to repeat a grade or who are “socially promoted.” These programs will increase student achievement, increase high school graduation rates, and provide a positive impact on labor market outcomes in the future.

► **Invest in technology and alternative skills training for college-bound and workforce-bound high school students**

Whether students plan to enroll in college or whether they intend to enter the job market, they must graduate with skills that equip them to succeed in today’s highly technical environment. Career pathways developed in conjunction with business and industry define what students should know and be able to do as they leave high school. The expectations of a career-ready student mirror expectations of a college-ready student; they represent the fundamental skills expected of a successful adult whether they enter the workforce or continue on to higher education. Technology is a key component of preparing today’s students to compete in tomorrow’s global arena; appropriate funding must be provided to enhance existing career-tech programs and expand the availability of these programs to all secondary students.

► **Ensure high school graduates are prepared for college and career experiences by transitioning focus from NHSPE to an exam aligned to the Common Core State Standards**

The Nevada Legislature established the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam (NHSPE) in 1979 to raise student writing standards for all high school graduates. The exam was expanded to include reading and mathematics in the 1980s, at which time the tests became a requirement for graduation. A science component was added in 2010, making Nevada’s exit exam requirement one of the most rigorous in the nation.

In 2010, Nevada adopted the Common Core State Standards, and joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia with the intent to develop common state assessments aligned to the new standards for implementation in 2014-2015. This nationwide initiative to strengthen academic standards is bringing changes to exit-exam policy as states implement the increased rigor and seek new ways of ensuring students are college and career ready.

The new Assessment and the existing NHSPE are very likely to be radically different. These transition years between curricula are difficult for teachers, students, and parents to be certain how to prepare our students to pass the existing NHSPE at the same time preparing for an unknown common core assessment.

The goal of educators is to ensure students are college and career ready. However, increasingly



more time is spent on preparing students to pass the Nevada High School Proficiency Exams, which is substantially different than preparing students to be college and career ready. Superintendents recommend temporarily suspending the NHSPE until the new assessments, based on the Common Core State Standards are available. This will ensure that students affected in these transitional years would not have their future jeopardized by a “High Stakes” test that no longer aligns with the curriculum.

Furthermore, superintendents recommend that during the transitional years, students be required to take the ACT exam as a requirement for graduation, as is currently required in several other states.

CONCLUSION

Ten years ago Nevada education leaders asked a critically fundamental question:

“What will it take to improve student achievement?”

Ten years ago Nevada education leaders answered with *iNVEST*.

Ten years ago Nevada education leaders presented this plan to the Nevada Legislature.

Ten years ago.

Ten years. A decade. Half a generation. Time for three governors and two two-term presidents. A big boom followed a bigger bust, followed by a bit of a recovery. iPads, “smart” phones, and the meteoric rise of social media. 75 percent of a student’s K-12 education.

But what of *iNVEST*? Of Nevada education? Of the prospects for Silver State students?

Have we kept pace with our times? Have we made good on our promises? Have we achieved the results we all know we must?

Where were we ten years ago? Where are we ten years later? Where will we be ten years from now? And ten years after that? And ten years after that?

iNVESTing in a brighter future during uncertain times is a hard thing - yet we know it’s the right thing. To paraphrase the Governor Sandoval: we cannot cut our way to student achievement; we cannot tax our way to student achievement; we must grow our way to student achievement. *iNVEST* provides a blueprint for such growth – growth in effective programs, growth in effective policies, and, yes, even growth in effective funding.

10 YEARS AGO. TEN YEARS LATER. TEN YEARS FROM NOW.

If not now...when? If not now...why?

NEVADA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARD OFFICERS 2012-2013

- ▶ **President – Chris Miller, Storey County**
- ▶ **President-Elect – Dr. Greg Koenig, Churchill County**
- ▶ **Vice President – Erin Cranor, Clark County**
- ▶ **Legislative Chair – Joe Crim, Pershing County**



NEVADA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS OFFICERS 2012-2013

- ▶ **President – Richard Stokes, Carson City**
- ▶ **Vice President – Jeff Zander, Elko County**
- ▶ **Secretary-Treasurer – Lisa Noonan, Douglas County**

NEVADA SUPERINTENDENTS 2013

- ▶ **Carson City – Richard Stokes**
- ▶ **Churchill County – Bus Scharmann, Interim Superintendent**
- ▶ **Clark County – Dwight D. Jones**
- ▶ **Douglas County - Lisa Noonan**
- ▶ **Elko County – Jeff Zander**
- ▶ **Esmeralda County – Gary Gazaway**
- ▶ **Eureka County – Ben Zunino**
- ▶ **Humboldt County – Dave Jensen**
- ▶ **Lander County – Jim Squibb**
- ▶ **Lincoln County – Nykki Holton**
- ▶ **Lyon County – Keith Savage**
- ▶ **Mineral County – Chris Schultz**
- ▶ **Nye County – Dale Norton**
- ▶ **Pershing County – Daniel Fox**
- ▶ **Storey County – Rob Slaby**
- ▶ **Washoe County – Pedro Martinez**
- ▶ **White Pine County – Robert Dolezal**

Special thanks to Applied Analysis for their contributions to this publication