

MINUTES

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

JOINT MEETING WITH SENATE ON AB 9, AB 293, AB 400, SB 204, SB 324
and SCR 14

March 9, 1977

Senators Present: Chairman Schofield
Senator Blakemore
Senator Hernstadt
Senator Neal

Senators Absent: Senator Faiss
Senator Raggio

Assemblyman Present: Chairman Vergiels
Mrs. Gomes
Mr. Goodman
Mr. Horn
Mr. Kissam
Mr. Rhoads
Mr. Schofield

Guests Present: See Attached

Chairman Schofield and Vergiels shared chairing the meeting with Assemblyman Vergiels calling the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. in the Senate Auditorium for hearings on AB 9, AB 293, AB 400, SB 204, SB 324 and SCR 14, all dealing with competency-based education.

Assemblyman Dale Goodman, District #26, read a statement on behalf of his bill, AB 293. He stated he had his bill drafted because of concern among his constituents about the quality of education prevailing. He listed advantages of his bill as requiring testing in grades 3, 6 and 9 to determine problems early enough to deal with them and a "grandfather clause" which would prevent students now in high school from being penalized. Since introducing his bill, Mr. Goodman added, he feels there is also a need for a companion teacher proficiency bill. His statement is attached as Exhibit A.

Assemblyman Nicholas Horn, sponsor of AB 400 from District #15, summarized his bill as requiring periodic testing to determine proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics in grades 6, 9 and 12. Although the student would not be held back in the lower grades for failure to pass the examination, but would receive remedial help, he would be required to pass the proficiency test before graduation.

JOINT EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 9, 1977

Page Two

In answer to Senator Neal's question, Mr. Horn explained it was not his intent to define proficiency, but to establish guidelines for the State to define and administer.

Senator William Hernstadt authored his bill, SB 324, because of concern among his constituents about the large amount of money being spent on education and the low results shown. He urged frequent testing in seven areas: reading, writing, arithmetic, American history and American government, basic economics and reasoning and logic.

Assemblyman Darrell Dreyer, District #14, one of the principal sponsors of AB 9, stated he feels this is necessary legislation because the people aren't getting enough for their tax dollar and since the educators aren't doing the job, the legislators must.

In response to Mr. Vergiels's question about who should have authority, Mr. Dreyer answered that the State Department should have in order to insure minimum statewide standards.

Speaking for the State Department of Education, John Gamble, superintendent, acknowledged the general concern about students being competent and pointed up some of the pitfalls such as acting too hastily, the fallibility of tests, the diversities of opinion surrounding this subject and lack of knowledge about the impact of competency. He then presented Mr. Robert O'Connell, Chairman of the Advisory Commission for the Competency-Based High School Diploma program.

Mr. O'Connell described the work of the Commission which was established in January 1976 and expects to have a full report in June, 1977, compiled through the efforts of seven Department members, 35 teachers and representatives of education, business, PTA, teachers associations and legislators from all parts of Nevada.

In concluding Mr. Gamble warned again against haste and suggested SCR 14 with amendments as the most promising vehicle for the legislature to consider at this time. Notes on the testimony of Mr. Gamble and Mr. O'Connell are attached As Exhibit B.

In answer to questions Mr. Gamble stated the ten common goals of education as including knowledge of basic skills, developing a well-rounded individual able to compete and contribute in society. He did not feel the State needed permissive legislation to phase in any of these acts as this would be covered in their authority to specify graduation requirements as their authority to establish certification requirements could confer authority to test teachers. He stated his support of such a program and felt it could be

JOINT EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 9, 1977

Page Three

implemented at all grade levels and enforced throughout the state and that there would have to be remedial work.

Senator Clifford Young, sponsor of SB 204, conducted a poll showing that 87% of those responding favored competency testing and consequently drafted his bill to require examinations in five areas, starting at the end of the sixth grade. Since then he has revised his opinion on the subjects for examination and where testing should start and now wants tests earlier to determine deficiencies early enough to do something about them in the prescribed areas of reading, writing, spelling, communications, basic computations and advocates a certificate for those who attend but don't pass the test.

Earl Evans, Clark County School Board, supported SCR 14 as amended, urging frequent testing, competency and accountability.

When Senator Hernstadt questioned him about presenting a certificate of attendance, Mr. Evans replied that he wouldn't want to force anyone to quit school because he couldn't get a regular diploma.

Dr. Herman Van Betten, member of the Clark County School Board, vice president of the State School Board Association and English teacher, defended the school boards and said they are rebounding from the trends and fads of the 60's and are now stressing academic subjects and warned about making laws too restrictive, causing more problems.

Jean Klebenow, member of the board of Reno PTA Council, the International Reading Association and mother of five, supported SCR 14 but questioned where the money would come from to fund the remedial program she feels would be necessary and suggested SCR 14 should also include a member of the State Department of Education.

Chairman Vergiels pointed out that the legislators are not asking for anything beyond what every teacher should be teaching at the present; therefore, remedial teachers should not be necessary.

Sandy McCormick, school trustee from Lyon County, expressed her opinion that children aren't standardized and therefore testing shouldn't be and that education should be set up to help student succeed not fail.

Senator Hernstadt pointed out that perhaps by awarding standard diplomas to all, the student who does achieve is being penalized.

Paul Ghilarduchi, president of the Nevada State Education Association, read a prepared statement supporting SCR 14 and bringing up un-

answered questions about competency-based education such as designing and administering tests, students who can't meet minimum standards and additional diagnostic testing. His remarks are included as Exhibit C.

Following him was Rita Hembleton, member of the Nevada Department of Education Task Force and president of the Washoe County Teachers Association, voicing support for the concept of competency-based testing but questioning the fiscal impact because of the need for additional personnel for developing the test, testing itself and remedial work. Her statement is Exhibit D.

Again Mr. Vergiels questioned the need for remedial work, asking how a student could get through school without being tested in reading, writing and computation. He also asked whether the Task Force is taking into account students' qualifications for taking a minimal competency test.

Warren Scott, president of the Nevada State School Board Association, introduced the school trustees from around the state and read a prepared statement, Exhibit E, discussing trends in education, changes in society and frustrations of school boards and asking questions about competency-based education and the school system itself, finally supporting SCR 14.

Dr. Marvin Piccolo, superintendent of Washoe County School District, agreed with everyone in endorsing the concept of competency but pointed out problems that must be considered, such as the complexity of tests, the mobility of students (33% turnover in Washoe County annually) and, while endorsing SCR 14, urged the legislators not to act in haste.

Clifford Lawrence, Clark County School District, suggested SCR 14 was most appropriate but that with improvements in test scores in Clark County, he doesn't believe it's necessary there and he opposed retaining children until they achieve certain levels at the same time acknowledging an obligation to the community to say that a high school diploma means something.

Mary Linn Moser, first vice president of Nevada PTA, speaking for the association, endorsed SCR 14 because it calls for a study which would be in line with the Department of Education's present action and opposed the other bills as being too inclusive and lacking funding for remedial or alternative study.

Elizabeth Lenz, member of the Washoe County School Board, endorsed SCR 14 as amended because she considers this a complicated matter

which requires study and funding. She suggested the legislature add AB 389, an act dealing with summer remedial programs, to any legislation which might be enacted and do something to aid school boards in getting rid of incompetent teachers.

Leonard Corsentino, board member from Eureka County, urged the legislature to let board members retain control locally.

Mr. Vergiels reiterated his feeling that "people want results, better trained graduates." He urged school boards to get efficiency from their teachers and administrators.

Ruby Ruedy, retired teacher, stating she had taught off and on since 1935, urged the administrators and legislators to talk to teachers, the people with the experience not the theory, to give them back discipline, to put time and energy into basics in the elementary grades.

Carl Shaft, superintendent of schools in Eureka County, defended school administrators and advocated going with SCR 14 and letting the State Department continue its program.

Earl Edwards, school trustee from White Pine County, said the legislators should listen to all those testifying and support SCR 14.

Chairman Schofield adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Harriet M. Keruff

Assembly Attache

GUEST REGISTER

SENATE COMMERCE & LABOR
COMMITTEE

Education

DATE: _____

THOSE WISHING TO TESTIFY SHOULD IDENTIFY THEMSELVES BEFORE GIVING TESTIMONY.....

NAME (Please Print)	DO YOU WISH TO TESTIFY	BILL NO.	REPRESENTING	PHONE
Joyce Woodhouse	NO	SCR 14	NSEA	882-5574
Jean Steen	NO		concerned citizen	747-1870
AE Andersen	NO	SCR 14	WHITE PINE COUNTY SCHOOLS	235-7186
Harry Linder	NO	SCR 14	WHITE PINE COUNTY SCHOOLS	235-7525
Elmer Jensen	NO	SCR 14	Churchill Co. Sch. Dist	493-5184
Geo. Puzan	NO	SCR 14	Churchill Co. Sch. Dist	423-3946
Tommy Larkin	NO	SCR 14	Churchill Co. Sch. Dist	423-4398
John Hawkins	NO	SCR 14	CARSON CO. Sch. Dist	882-6895
Arlo W. Smith	NO	SCR 14	Mineral Co. Sch. Dist	945-2403
Edward H. Howard	NO	SCR 14	Ne. Dept of Ed	885-5700
Tommy Bellis	NO		Min. Co. Dist Atty	945-3636
Reginald Baker	NO	SCR 14	Min. Co. Bond Atty	945-3962
Leon Hensley	NO	"	Lander Co. Sch. Dist	635-2886
Frank Sargent	NO	"	" " " "	"
Lawrence Linn	NO		Clark County Sch. Dist	649-4467
Robert Gunn	NO		" " " "	"
Earl E. Edwards	YES	SCR 14	" " " "	642-3777
Louis O. Aiche	NO		Lincoln County Sch. Dist	745-3537
John F. Aiche	NO		Guest	"
Clyford Lawrence	NO		CCSD	732-5467
Ana L. Hamilton	NO		NSSBA	883-

① Paul Philarducci
 ② Mrs. Hamilton

GUEST LIST

NAME

REPRESENTING

WISH TO SPEAK

(Please print)

Yes

No

OK

OK

OK

OK

OK

OK

OK

OK

OK

OK

OK

OK

(Please print)		Yes	No
E. Rec Sealey	Washoe County Teachers Assn		X
Rita Hambleton	Washoe County Teachers Assoc	X	
Heuben D. Palmer	Mineral County School Board		X
Robert G. York	" " " "		X
Conrad Post	" " " "		X
Alfred T. Price	" " " "		X
Warren Scott	Nev. State School Bds Asso	X	
Jean Kleberow	Parent	X	
Sandy McCormick	Lyon County School Trustee	X	
Maryanne Baker	parent		X
Mary Ann Moses	Nevada PTA	✓	
Paul Philarducci	NSEA	X	
John Sample	Dept of Education	X	
Marnie Moss	Washoe Co School	X	
Marnie Piccolo	Washoe Co School	X	
Doris Wright	" " " "		X
Ray Calvin	Esmer. Co. School		X
Auston Price	Esmeralda Co. Schools		X
John Day	W.P. Schools		X
John S. Norchi	W.P. Schools		X
Ruby Ruedy	retired teacher	✓	X
Elizabeth Long	W.C. School Trustee	X	
James J. Moss	Lumboldt Co. School Bd		✓
Bob Sweet	" " " Dist		✓



Nevada Legislature

FIFTY-NINTH SESSION

March 9, 1977

TESTIMONY CONCERNING A.B. 293

As I walked door to door in my campaign, one issue was predominant. That issue was academic achievement, or I should say, lack of academic achievement, among students in public schools. Academic achievement not only in Nevada but throughout the nation has been on a steady decline for about 20 years.

Verbal and mathematical ability of students has dropped every year for 14 consecutive years, according to scores on the College Entrance Examination Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Scores on American College Testing Program (ACT) tests have also fallen during the past 11 years for which data is available.

This alarming deterioration of basic reading, writing, speaking, thinking and mathematic skills among public school students is not restricted just to the one million college preparatory students who take SAT and ACT tests nationwide each year. This tragic decline of basic everyday skills is also occurring in the lower elementary and junior high school grades, where the learning of such skills will determine a person's success or failure during his entire working life. That is what prompted me to introduce A.B. 293. This bill will provide for comprehensive examination not only to get a high school diploma, but at grades

3, 6 and 9. Testing in the earlier grades can help determine if a student has a learning disability, so the student might be channeled into programs to help that problem.

A.B. 293 also provides a "grandfathering clause" so that students now in high school aren't subject to the provisions of this bill.

Since introducing this bill, I felt there should be a companion bill. I've asked for a teacher proficiency bill that is designed to help stop and reverse the decline in basic academic skills among students at all grade levels. It simply requires that teachers themselves--as a prerequisite for being awarded educator certificates--be able to pass a test demonstrating their own proficiency in basic reading, writing, grammar, spelling and mathematics in order to obtain a teaching or school administration job in the public school system.

I feel that teacher proficiency is as important as comprehensive examinations and the two bills should go hand in hand. If the teaching is not up to par, we can't expect students to pass comprehensive examinations. I think these steps must be taken and I ask your support for A.B. 293.

NOTES FOR VERBAL STATEMENT OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TO THE
JOINT MEETING OF
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, HEALTH, WELFARE AND STATE INSTITUTIONS
AND
THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Wednesday, March 9, 1977
Room 131, 3:00 P.M.

A. B. 9 -- Amends NRS 389

Requires pupils in public high schools to complete course of study and show proficiency in basic skills as prerequisites to receiving high school diploma.

A. B. 293 -- Amends NRS 389

Requires periodic comprehensive examinations of public school pupils to determine competency in specified subjects.

A. B. 400 -- Amends NRS 389

Requires periodic testing of public school pupils to determine proficiency in specified subjects.

A. B. 204 -- Amends NRS 389

Requires periodic testing of public school pupils to determine competency in specified subjects.

S. B. 324 -- Amends NRS 389

Requires comprehensive examinations of public school pupils to determine competency in specified subjects.

S. C. R. 14 --

Directs legislative commission to study and make recommendations on subject of pupil achievement.

1. The State Board of Education recognized concern about the credibility of the high school diploma.
2. The State Board of Education validated the concern of Nevada residents by surveying the attitudes of approximately 4,290 citizens -- 2,690 responses were received.
3. National concern regarding student deficiencies in basic skills, declining test scores, etc. has precipitated crisis actions by many states and school districts. The State Board and Department are learning from the successes and problems encountered by other agencies. This knowledge will enable Nevada to develop a better program.
4. Precipitous actions in other states and school districts have produced unexpected consequences which have proven to be disadvantageous to students and school personnel and such consequences are frequently costly to correct.
5. The variety of bills introduced in the 1977 Legislature provides evidence of the interest of legislators in competency requirements for public school students. The differences of the various bills also provides an indication of the diversity of opinion regarding the problem and ways to solve it.
6. The desirability of using standardized test scores in making decisions about the promotion/retention of students should be considered carefully by legislators. All tests are fallible, and test results should be used very judiciously in making decisions that will affect the welfare of students. The State Board and Department are concerned about the effects of "social promotion" on the educational attainment of students and agree that student achievement should be the most important criterion for advancement through the educational system. Test scores can be used to assist in decisions about promotion/retention, but students must have repeated opportunity to take tests and receive appropriate instruction in areas needing improvement.
7. Thus, the State Board of Education and Legislature appear to be in agreement that the State does have an interest in the identification of needed competencies for public school pupils.
8. It is also apparent that the Legislature is interested in having the State Board of Education identify competencies and provide for the measurement of student attainment of these competencies.
9. The Legislature and State Board of Education have identified common areas in which competencies are to be identified. The Department is working with school district personnel to identify specific minimum competencies in arithmetic, reading and writing for high school graduates. Requirements for American Government and American History are already required by statute and by State Board of Education high school graduation requirements.

10. Several of the bills specify grade levels at which certain examinations must be administered to students. The State Board of Education project has not progressed to the stage at which specific measurement procedures have been determined. However, it is known that all groups involved in the project have recommended that testing must begin early in the pupil's education experience so that opportunities for repeated testing and specialized instruction can occur.
11. The full impact of competency-based requirement for high school graduation is not known at this time. Certainly it can be assumed that the requirements will have some influence on school curriculum, school staff and pupil assignments. However, the extent of the impact in terms of potential time and cost consideration cannot be predicted accurately. We have some genuine concern about the advisability of premature efforts to specify deadline dates, testing levels and other factors until the consequences of such specifications are known. Thus, the project being conducted by the Department has been designed to permit a deliberate and logical approach to the development of policies and regulations.

Mr. Robert O'Connell, Chairman, Advisory Commission for the Competency-Based High School Diploma Program, will now describe the progress and expected accomplishments of the Department project.

1. 15-Member Advisory Commission appointed in November, 1976. Members represent business, industry, University system, school superintendents, Nevada PTA, State School Boards Association, Nevada School Administrators Association, Nevada State Education Association and the Nevada State Legislature. The Advisory Commission reviews work plans, work quality and policy issues and makes recommendations to the Department and State Board of Education.
2. A 7-member Department committee has completed work with a 35-member Task Force of Nevada public school teachers. These groups have produced, in three meetings of two days each, comprehensive listings of specific, measurable, minimum skills in arithmetic, reading and writing that should be expected of all Nevada high school graduates. The 35 teachers represent all 17 Nevada school districts.
3. A group of 26 teachers, administrators, counselors and research personnel will work with the Department Committee in April and May to develop recommendations for the methods to be used to measure student attainment of minimum competencies. This group will also recommend procedures and policies needed to implement and operate the minimum competency program. It is expected that this group will complete their work in three, two-day meetings. Between meetings the groups share information with their colleagues in each Nevada school district. All 17 Nevada school districts will have representatives assigned to the group.

Robert O'Connell (continued)

4. A report containing information produced by both groups and the Advisory Commission will be reported to the State Board of Education in June, 1977.

John Gamble

1. It is apparent that the State Board of Education and the Nevada State Legislature are endeavoring to improve the educational programs in the public schools to the extent that all pupils are ensured the opportunity to develop minimum competencies in certain areas. Because of the unknown consequences of such a project, the Advisory Commission, State Board of Education and Department have indicated that action by the Legislature may be unnecessary or premature at this time. Of course, the State Board of Education and Department will administer any statute or fulfill any resolution passed by the Legislature.
2. Perhaps an amendment to S.C.R. 14 could provide the most promising vehicle to attain the objectives of the Legislature and State Board of Education. Because of the progress made to date in the Department Competency-Based High School Diploma Program, the Advisory Commission and State Board of Education have recommended that S.C.R. 14 be amended to designate that items 8, 9 and 10 be made the responsibility of the State Board of Education. Further, that S.C.R. 14 be amended so that the services of the State Board and the Department of Education, and the Advisory Commission for the Competency-Based High School Diploma Program will be included with the groups to work with the Legislative Commission on items 1 through 7.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION AND THE SENATE EDUCATION,
HEALTH, WELFARE, AND STATE INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

March 9, 1977

The Nevada State Education Association goes on record today in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

Teachers in Nevada are very concerned with our educational system. We are a very vital force in that system and sincerely desire to see that every child receives the very best preparation for life that he or she can achieve.

We, as teachers, are cognizant of the fact that the public wants competency testing. There is a need in that parents can realize how their ~~students~~ ^{children} are achieving in the basic skills.

However, there are many unanswered questions that must be addressed before competency testing is initiated.

Some of these questions are:

Who is going to design and administer the tests? Will it be done locally for each district? If so, certain guidelines must be set so that results will be valid.

Many of the bills that have been introduced deal mainly with the need for tests at certain levels but do not take into account all of the areas necessary to have an educationally sound competency testing program in the State of Nevada.

Guidelines for designing the tests must be established with specific disciplines that will be measured. Minimum degrees of competency for each grade level that will be tested must be valid. Costs for designing and administering the tests will have to be borne by either the state or the local school district.

Students who cannot meet the minimum standards must be taken into consideration. Special programs must be initiated in order to meet their specific needs. Just having a student repeat the same grade will not solve the problem.

Additional diagnostic testing in various forms must be a part of the program in order to isolate the reasons for a student failing to meet the minimum standards. Classes where applicable must be offered to help the student overcome his sub-standard achievement.

As you know, under mandate by the State Board of Education, there is a group of people working on a competency-based high school diploma program. This group has worked for several months now and are expected to complete their task in June. The work so far accomplished and the work yet to be done addresses many of the problems we have just discussed. We believe these professional educators must be allowed to complete their task. In doing so, we believe that the education profession has taken a giant step toward addressing the concerns of all of us about the results we are producing through education.

Therefore, the NSEA supports S.C.R. 14 as a companion measure to the work already in progress. The competency-based testing task forces, we believe, will provide what so many legislators are looking for in A.B. 9, A.B. 293, A.B. 400, and SB 324, and S.B. 204. The legislative study will provide an opportunity for us to all look together at the other problems that do affect the achievement of our students: curriculum requirements, class size, student discipline, to name a few.

We share your concern. Let's receive the results of the task forces. Let's not take one idea, that of competency testing, as the panacea of our problems. Let's deal with the whole system and its problems.

We urge your support for Senate Concurrent Resolution 14. Together, legislators, teachers, administrators, and parents, must work to understand the problems in order to effect the changes to solve those problems.

We thank you for your kind attention.



Washoe County Teachers Association

4600 Kietzke, Bldg. I, Suite 205 • Reno, Nevada 89502

Telephone (702) 825-5522

RITA HAMBLETON, President

E. REA SEELEY, Executive Director

March 9, 1977

Presented to a joint hearing of the Nevada Senate Health, Education, and Welfare Committee and the Nevada Assembly Education Committee.

Re: Competency-Based Testing

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Senate and Assembly:

My name is Rita Hambleton. I am President of the Washoe County Teachers Association, a high school English teacher in Washoe County, and a member of Task Force I of the Nevada Department of Education to develop a Competency-Based High School Diploma Program.

While I support the concept of competency-based testing, I find I have some problems with the bills, both in the Senate and the Assembly, which have been introduced in this session of the legislature.

My first concern is that none of the proposed legislation indicates a fiscal impact at either the state or local level. There are three areas of additional expense for governmental entities inherent in the direction mandated in these bills. First, testing of the nature proposed in the bills would require additional personnel to administer and to grade the tests. Second, development and production of testing instruments would be a cost factor. Third, remedial work necessary for students who were unable to pass the examinations the first time would have to be provided.

Having worked with Task Force I as a writing teacher to develop criteria to test basic skills in writing, I am convinced, as were all of the other writing teachers on the task force, that the only way to test writing is to have students write. Who is to correct the thousands of writing samples which the tests in



writing would produce? Obviously, personnel will be needed to accomplish this task.

Task Force I completed suggested criteria for testing reading, writing, and arithmetic for minimum competency for high school graduates. Over thirty teachers worked six full days to develop the criteria alone. In addition, personnel time will be needed to develop the actual tests based on the criteria.

Remedial programs, to be successful, must have a small number of students assigned to each remedial teacher. The present funding formula would be inadequate to provide the necessary remedial programs. If those students who needed remediation were retained in their previous grades, class size would become excessively large and new classes would be needed. Again, a cost item.

Another problem with much of the proposed legislation is the lack of provision for those students who have learning disabilities. These students, who can become productive members of our society, could probably never pass a competency-based test. Provision for handicapped students is also lacking in much of the proposed legislation.

Some of the proposed legislation does not address itself to a timeline for development and administration of the examinations. Such a testing program might well make curriculum changes necessary, depending upon what is finally tested. It would seem grossly unfair to students who have already begun approved high school programs to hold them responsible for a new requirement which they may or may not have been prepared for.

I would urge the legislators examining these proposals to study the impact on students and the educational programs in Nevada before legislating competency-based examinations.

THANK YOU CHAIRMAN _____

GOOD AFTERNOON LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

WE WISH TO THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR THE STATE SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION TO EXPRESS SOME OF OUR IDEAS, CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE VARIOUS BILLS UNDER STUDY MANDATING MINIMUM COMPETENCIES IN SPECIFIC AREAS AS PREREQUISITES FOR A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

DURING RECENT DECADES IT APPEARS THAT EVERY ATTEMPT HAS BEEN MADE TO MOVE THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL YOUTH TO THE EXTENT THAT MANY SEGMENTS OF OUR SOCIETY HAVE NOW RAISED THE QUESTION ABOUT THE MEANING AND WORTH OF THE DIPLOMAS.

WE HEAR SUCH STORIES AS "COLLEGE STUDENTS FLUNK 8TH GRADE EXAM PREPARED IN 1906". IT'S TRUE, HOWEVER, ONLY 10% OF THE YOUTH ATTEND SCHOOL IN THOSE DAYS AS COMPARED WITH ABOUT 96% TODAY. THIS IN ITSELF IS SIGNIFICANT IN THAT DURING THE OLDEN DAYS THE ATTENDENCE MAKEUP VARIED GREATLY FROM DAY AND EVEN SO NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO ^{to} ~~PASS~~ ^{educate} EVERYONE. SCHOOL ATTENDENCE TODAY ALSO INCLUDES SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS, SOME OF WHOM HAVE VERY MINIMUM LEARNING ABILITIES.

A RECENT SURVEY FOUND THAT 29 OF THE 51 STATES (INCLUDING D.C.) ARE EITHER PLANNING OR OPERATING A "PERFORMANCED BASED" EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

THE POSITION THAT MOST EDUCATORS WOULD LIKE TO TAKE IS THAT THE COMPETENCY BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAM IS NOT ONE OF SCREENING PERSONS OUT OF A DIPLOMA, BUT A PROCEDURE OF IDENTIFYING AND CORRECTING DEFICIENCIES EARLY IN THE STUDENT'S CARREER.

AS IN MANY STATES, WE ARE ALL LOOKING TOWARD SOME TYPE OF ACHIEVEMENT NORM-REFERENCED TEST PROGRAM TO HELP GUIDE THE STUDENT THROUGHOUT HIS SCHOOL YEARS TO THESE COMPETENCIES.

THIS ALL SOUNDS VERY SIMPLE, BUT LET'S ~~XXX~~ BACK UP FOR A MINUTE AND REVIEW SOME OTHER ASPECTS OF THE REASON FOR THINKING ABOUT A COMPETENCY BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAM IN THE FIRST PLACE:

1. IT SEEMS THAT SOCIETY AS A WHOLE HAS BECOME MORE RELAXED AND PERMISSIVE.

THIS HAS HAD A GREAT INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND SCHOOL TRUSTEES.

2. THE LAST FEW DECADES HAS WITNESSED INCREASE DIFFICULTIES IN THE FAMILY UNIT WHICH HAS OFTEN CAUSED LEARNING PROBLEMS FOR CHILDREN.
3. TODAY'S SOCIETY HAS BECOME SO PERMISSIVE TOWARDS YOUTH THAT THE GROWTH OF STUDENTS RIGHTS, WITHOUT A CORRESPONDING GROWTH IN RESPONSIBILITIES, HAS LEAD TO MUCH CONFUSION IN THE EDUCATION ARENA.
4. TELEVISION HAS BECOME A LARGE INFLUENCE IN THE DISPENSING OF INFORMATION AND HAS CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO DE-EMPHASIZING THE NEED TO READ AND TO DEVELOPE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS.
5. THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRONG TEACHER UNIONS HAS MADE IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR SCHOOL BOARDS TO DISMISS INEFFECTIVE TEACHERS.
6. BOARD MEMBERS ARE HAVING A DIFFICULT TIME IN STAYING ON TOP OF ALL THE ISSUES DUE IN PART TO THE FOLLOWING REASONS:
 - (A) FRUSTRATIONS IN THEIR FIGHTS WITH TEACHERS UNIONS IN ATTEMPTS TO RETAIN CONTROL OF THEIR POLICY MAKING RESPONSIBILITIES.
 - (B) FRUSTRATIONS CAUSED BY THE INABILITY TO CONVINCCE MANY STATE LEGISLATURES, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND FELLOW CITIZENS OF THE NEED TO REMAIN AS FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT AS PRACTICAL FROM H.E.W. IN ORDER TO KEEP STATE AND LOCAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION.
 - (C) FRUSTRATION CAUSED BY COURT DECISIONS THAT CAUSE A GREAT DEAL OF EXPENSE WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COST OF AN ORDER.
 - (D) A LACK ON THE PART OF A GREAT MANY BOARD MEMBERS TO PUT OUT THE EFFORT TO EDUCATE THEMSELVES PROPERLY ON THE ISSUES. MANY FEEL IT IS MORE PRUDENT TO STAY HOME FROM THE CONVENTIONS BECAUSE IT WILL SAVE THE DISTRICT MONEY.

THESE ARE CERTAINLY NOT ALL OF THE REASONS, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE THERE ARE VARIOUS AND COMPLEX REASONS THAT HAVE LED UP TO OUR SITUATION TODAY.

THERE ARE STILL A GREAT MANY QUESTIONS THAT ARE UNANSWERED, SUCH AS --

1. IS THE COMPETENCY BASED DIPLOMA JUST THE FIRST STEP IN ATTEMPTING TO RETURN TO THE STANDARDS OF PREVIOUS DECADES?
2. ARE OUR LEGISLATORS GOING TO ALLOW THE LEVEL OF COMPETENCE TO BE A NEGOTIATED ITEM?
3. HOW WILL THE COURTS VIEW THESE PROGRAMS? PERHAPS THEY WILL SAY THEY ARE DISCRIMINATING AGAINST MINORITY OR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS.
4. HOW WILL OUR NATIONAL CONGRESS VIEW THESE PROGRAMS? WHAT INROADS WILL BE MADE BY THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE UNDER THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION? THEY ARE ALREADY SENDING OUT QUESTIONAIRES TO DETERMINE HOW THEIR FINDINGS CAN BE "MOVED INTO USE" BY THE SCHOOLS.
5. WHAT IS TO BE DONE, IF ANYTHING, WITH THE POSSIBLE 15-20% OF THE STUDENTS THAT MAY FAIL THE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS?
6. WHAT OTHER CLASSES ARE TO BE GIVEN THE STATUS OF THE BASICS? HOW ABOUT GOVERNMENT, U.S. HISTORY, HEALTH EDUCATION, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, ETC.?
7. WILL WE DEVELOPE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL SYSTEMS?
8. WILL WE ISSUE OTHER TYPES OF DIPLOMAS? AND ETC. & ETC.

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE HIGH SCHOOL COMPETENCY BASED DIPLOMA WILL NOT SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS.

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IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE PRINCIPAL ROLE OF THE SCHOOLS IN DAYS GONE BY WAS TO MERELY EDUCATE THE STUDENT, NOT SO ANYMORE, THE SCHOOL GROUNDS ARE NOW OFTEN USED AS BATTLEFIELDS FOR POLITICIANS AND JUDGES TO CURE THE SOCIAL INJUSTICES IN SOCIETY.

THE COMPETENCY BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAM WILL SUPPOSEDLY VERIFY TO THE COMMUNITY THAT THE END RESULT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION DOES MEET THE EXPECTATIONS OF SOCIETY. BUT WILL IT? IN COLORADO WHERE SUCH A PROGRAM HAS BEEN IN EXISTANCE FOR ABOUT 15 YEARS WE ARE TOLD THAT THEIR TESTS ARE BASED KFOR A 12 YEAR OLD CAPABILITY AND THAT

MANY 5th GRADERS CAN PASS THE TEST. THIS VERY TEST THAT HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS MUST BE ABLE TO PASS IN ORDER TO GET A DIPLOMA.

WE ARE DOING BETTER THAN THAT IN NEVADA. ITS POSSIBLE, THAT IF WE FOLLOWED THE LEAD OF COLORADO, WE COULD ACTUALLY LOWER THE QUALITY OF OUR EDUCATION.

PEOPLE SEEM TO EXPECT MANY DIFFERENT THINGS OUT OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

1. SOME BELIEVE THEY SHOULD OBTAIN SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE " GOOD LIFE".
2. SOME BELIEVE THE CHILDREN SHOULD BE DEVELOPED "INTELLECTUALLY".
3. SOME BELIEVE THAT TO DEVELOPE THE "BEST CHARACTER" IS MOST IMPORTANT.
4. SOME BELIEVE THAT THE STUDENT SHOULD BE TRAINED TO STEP INTO A JOB IN INDUSTRY.
5. SOME BELIEVE THAT THE STUDENT SHOULD RECEIVE AN ALL AROUND EXPOSURE TO LIFE'S PROBLEMS AND BE TAUGHT HOW TO COPE WITH THESE PROBLEMS.
6. SOME SUPPORT STRONG ATHELETIC AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.
7. IN THE LAST DECADE MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM SHOULD ASSUME MORE AND MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STUDENT IN THE AREA OF HIS GENERAL CARE AND WELFARE. THERE SEEMS TO BE A GROWING NUMBER THAT BELIEVE THE CHILD SHOULD BE A WARD OF THE STATE IN TOTAL.
8. SOME BELIEVE WE SHOULD EMPHASISE THE ARTS IN OUR CIRICULUM.
9. SOME BELIEVE WE SHOULD EMPHASISE SPENDING GREATER EFFORTS IN EDUCATING THE MINORITIES.
10. SOME BELIEVE WE SHOULD SPEND GREATER EFFORTS IN EDUCATING THE HANDICAPPED. AND THIS IS NOT THE TOTAL LIST.

THE COMPETENCY BASED PROGRAM SEEMS TO BE ZEROING IN ON THE "INTELLECTUAL CONCERNS" WHICH IS FINE, HOWEVER I SUBMIT THAT THE PROBLEM IS BROADER THAN THAT.

I PERSONALLY FEEL THAT A GREAT MANY OF OUR DESIRES COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED MERELY BY PUTTING & THE SPANKING BACK INTO THE CLASSRROOM.

BUT SINCE THAT SEEMS TO BE OUT OF THE QUESTION, IN THIS "HIGHLY DEVELOPED CIVILIZATION" OUR NEXT BEST RECOMMENDATION IS TO HOLD OFF BEFORE ACTING ON ANY COMPETENCY

BASED LEGISLATION UNTIL THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CAN REPORT TO YOU THE RESULTS OF THEIR EFFORTS IN THIS FIELD OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

I AM ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY BOARD FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COMPETENCY BASED DIPLOMA PROGRAM AND WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS.

ANOTHER POINT THAT SHOULD BE AIRED IS THAT AGAIN THE BASIC CONCEPT OF LOCAL LAY CONTROL IS BEING ERODED AWAY. WE SHOULD REMIND OURSELVES THAT ONCE DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY IS TAKEN FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL, THE NATIONALIZING OF OUR CHILDREN IS MERELY THE NEXT STEP.

I HAVE ONE LAST OBSERVATION TO MAKE, AND THAT IS THAT PARENTS SHOULD CONTINUALLY BE REMINDED THAT IT IS PRIMARILY THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE THAT THEIR CHILDREN OBTAIN THE MOST OUT OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

NEVADA PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION

Testimony

Joint Education Committee Hearing
Competency Based Diplomas

Wednesday, March 9, 1977

I am Mary Lou Moser, 1st Vice President, Nevada Parent Teacher Association.

The Nevada Parent Teacher Association, with its 23,000 members, has long been concerned with educational accountability. Pupil achievement, or competency based diplomas, is certainly a major consideration of accountability.

We are not opposed to competency based diplomas. We are, however, opposed to several of the bills under consideration today:

AB-9, AB-293, AB-400, and SB-204, and for these reasons:

1. Each of these bills speaks to all children in the public schools of Nevada. We are concerned about those youngsters in special education classes or those with learning disabilities. Would those children also be required to undergo tests of competency before advancing?
2. Remedial or alternative study is included in the language of the several bills, however, there are no fiscal notes attached to any of the bills. Remedial programs do cost money because a) pupil-teacher ratio of necessity is much lower, b) often remedial teachers have more specific

- training and longer years of employment, therefore, higher salaries, and c) progress for many remedial students is considerably slower than for those students in the regular classroom.
3. Another area requiring fiscal notation is the testing process itself. Purchase or production, and processing of tests require financing. If current funding must be used, what programs in each district must be shelved to cover this cost?

The Nevada Parent Teacher association does support SCR-14, and for these reasons:

1. SCR-14 calls for a legislative study on a broad spectrum of interrelated educational problems which we feel lead to competency based education: pupil achievement, pupil-teacher ratios, classroom discipline and vandalism, curriculum requirements, and competency based diplomas.
2. SCR-14 further requests a report back to the legislature in two years on findings & recommendations. We in PTA realize you are worried about implementation of recommendations of such a study by local Districts. But we do not feel legislation without such a comprehensive study is necessarily what is needed for the consumers of such legislation -- our children in our public schools. Nor do we believe that hasty legislation is always good legislation. That something should be done, we are aware. But we do suggest the involvement of teachers, administrators, State Department of Education, parents, legislators, business

people throught the state in making such determinations.

3. As you know, there is currently a study being conducted on what minimum competencies a Nevada graduating senior should have in the areas of reading, writing and arithmetic. Three of your members serve on the advisory board for this study, as do I. The study is most comprehensive. Skills and concepts our Nevada students will need are being recommended by those persons directly involved with stddents --the teachers of this state. The work of this commission could be incorporated into that called for in SCR-14.
4. The Denver public schools have a competency based program of some 16 years duration. A representative from Denver spoke to the advisory commission recently. Several points of interest *are:*
 - a. Competency based diplomas are alive and working in the Denver schools. ^{*Number 3*} ~~Their~~ students not receiving diplomas has dropped in the last five years from 3% to 1.6% of the graduating seniors.
 - b. Denver students like knowing they are competent in these areas.
 - c. The school system has tremendous community ⁴support because the community is involved at all levels of the program.
 - d. Our commission was warned that we should ask for funding for test development and for remedial programs and that legislation be carefully studied before adoption.

- e. Basic skills of all students should be measured as they progress through the schools. (Which our Districts currently do).
- f. We should not expect students in all parts of the state to react and score the same and have the same percentages of competency. They won't.
- g. But most of all, think the process through, with input from all levels -- government, education & public -- before embarking on a mandated program.

The Nevada PTA would, therefore, urge you to favorably consider SCR-14 and to include in it a very thorough information process so that every citizen in our state is well aware of where we are educationally, and what will be expected of students, schools, and parents; and that such a program must be continually updated.

Thank you very much for your consideration here today.