



## Nevada's Public Education System General Information

Nevada's system of public elementary and secondary education has its basis in the *Nevada Constitution*. At the State level, the system is governed through Nevada's Department of Education (NDE), headed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction with oversight provided by the State Board of Education. The Department is responsible for regulating and supporting the State's 17 school districts and 647 public schools. In Nevada, responsibility for the education of elementary and secondary students is divided or shared among the State, local school districts, and charter schools. The Legislature plays an important role in the establishment, structuring, and funding of Nevada's system of public elementary and secondary education.

### CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS AND HISTORY

The *Nevada Constitution*, Article 11, Section 2, makes the State responsible for the establishment of the public school system. Specifically, the *Nevada Constitution* states, "The legislature shall provide for a uniform system of common schools . . . ."

In general, the Nevada Legislature has four primary responsibilities for public education: (1) providing for a uniform system of common schools; (2) prescribing the manner of appointment and duties of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; (3) indicating specific programs and courses of study; and (4) maintaining overall budget authority and establishing guaranteed per pupil funding.

Over the years, the Nevada Legislature has adopted a body of law within the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (Title 34, "Education") regarding the system of public schools. Sections of Title 34 address the local administrative organization; financial support of the school system; the system of public instruction; courses of study; textbooks; personnel; pupils; school property; and the education of pupils with disabilities.

### GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

#### State Board of Education and the State Superintendent

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 2 (File No. 89, *Statutes of Nevada*), as approved by the 2009 Legislature, directed the Legislative Commission to conduct an interim study concerning the governance and oversight of the system of K through 12 public education in Nevada. In response to this legislation, the Legislative Commission appointed three members of the Senate and three members of the Assembly to form a Committee and carry out the study.

## Chapter 2

Based upon the findings of the interim study, the Committee recommended actions necessary for the efficient and effective operation of the statewide system to ensure the steady progression of Nevada's public schools and the achievement of Nevada's pupils. A report of the results of the study and recommendations for legislation was submitted to the 76th Session of the Nevada Legislature (2011). The report may be accessed in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) or on the Research Division's website at: <http://leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/Publications/InterimReports/2011/Bulletin11-03.pdf>. Recommendations of the Committee were subsequently incorporated into Senate Bill 197 (Chapter 380, *Statutes of Nevada*) for consideration by the 2011 Legislature.

Senate Bill 197, as approved by the 2011 Legislature, made numerous changes affecting the structure and governance of Nevada's system of public elementary and secondary education. These include revising the selection process for members of the State Board of Education to consist of voting members elected by the voters in each of the State's four congressional districts and three members appointed by the Governor. In addition to the voting members, the Board includes four nonvoting members appointed by the Governor after being nominated by various entities specified in the bill. Prior to the approval of S.B. 197, the State Board of Education consisted of ten members chosen statewide in nonpartisan elections.

The measure also changed the selection process of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to require the Governor to appoint the State Superintendent from a list submitted by the State Board of Education. Prior to the passage of S.B. 197, the State Superintendent was appointed by the State Board of Education. The measure further revised the current vision and mission statements of the Board, and provided the Superintendent with the authority to enforce the K through 12 education laws in Nevada and to ensure the duties and responsibilities of various councils and commissions are carried out.

### **School Districts and Charter Schools**

Under the authority granted to it by the *Nevada Constitution*, the Legislature established a system of school districts to provide for a mechanism of local control. The Nevada Legislature, in a Special Session held in 1956, made extensive changes to the structure of Nevada's public school system. Among other changes, the Legislature eliminated the 208 legally active local school districts that had existed in Nevada and replaced them with just 17 districts, each of which is coterminous with county boundaries.

Under current law, boards of trustees are composed of either five or seven members; districts with more than 1,000 pupils have seven-member boards. Nevada school district boards of trustees carry out a number of policy roles which include: approving curriculum; enforcing courses of study prescribed by statute; administering the State system of public instruction; establishing district policies and procedures; and providing oversight of the district's budget.

Charter schools in Nevada operate under performance-based contracts and are authorized by school districts, universities, or the State Public Charter School Authority, which was created in 2011. The Authority has been given Local Education Agency status so that it may function more like a school district, particularly related to the receipt of federal education funding.

### Legislature

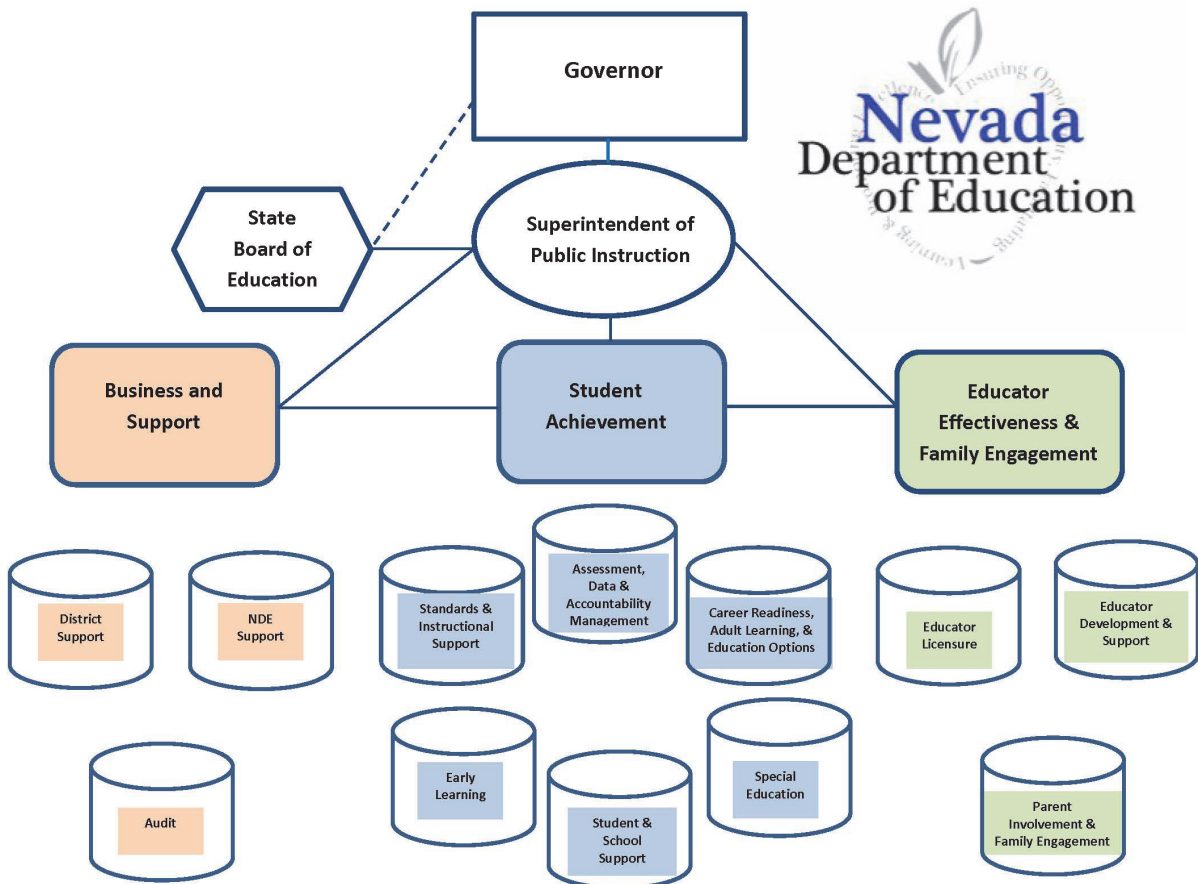
During its biennial sessions, the Legislature acts upon numerous policy and fiscal measures dealing with public education. The two standing committees dealing with policy matters are the Senate Committee on Education and the Assembly Committee on Education. Bills requiring substantive funding are processed by the two appropriations committees—the Senate Committee on Finance and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. During the interim period between legislative sessions, fiscal matters related to education are considered by the Interim Finance Committee; education policy issues are discussed by the Legislative Committee on Education.



**With the establishment of State government in 1864, Nevada had 10 organized counties in which there were 12 school districts, 8 school houses, and 18 schools.**

Nevada’s Public Education System—Department of Education

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Source: NDE, 2014.

In 2014, the Superintendent of Public Instruction implemented a substantial reorganization of NDE, aligning leadership and organizational units around three major functions: (1) Student Achievement; (2) Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement; and (3) Business and Support Services. The above chart reflects these changes, as well as the current governance arrangement between the Governor, State Board of Education, and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

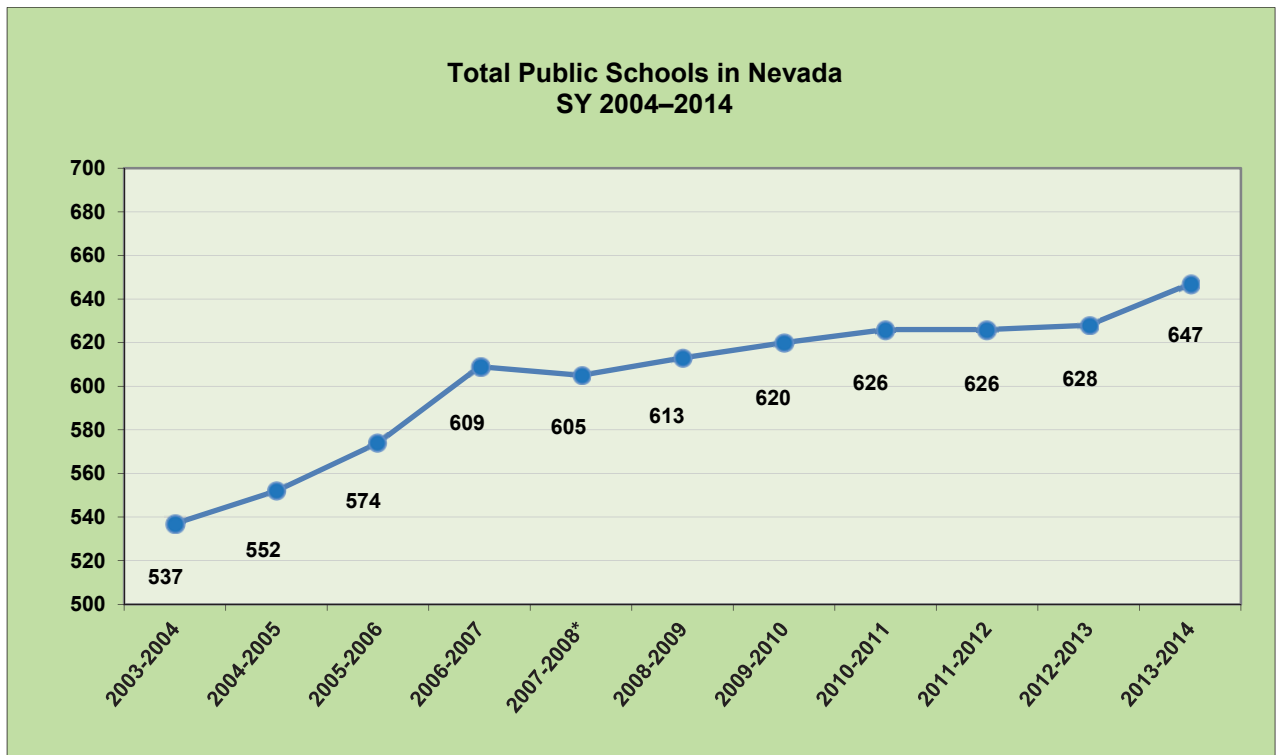
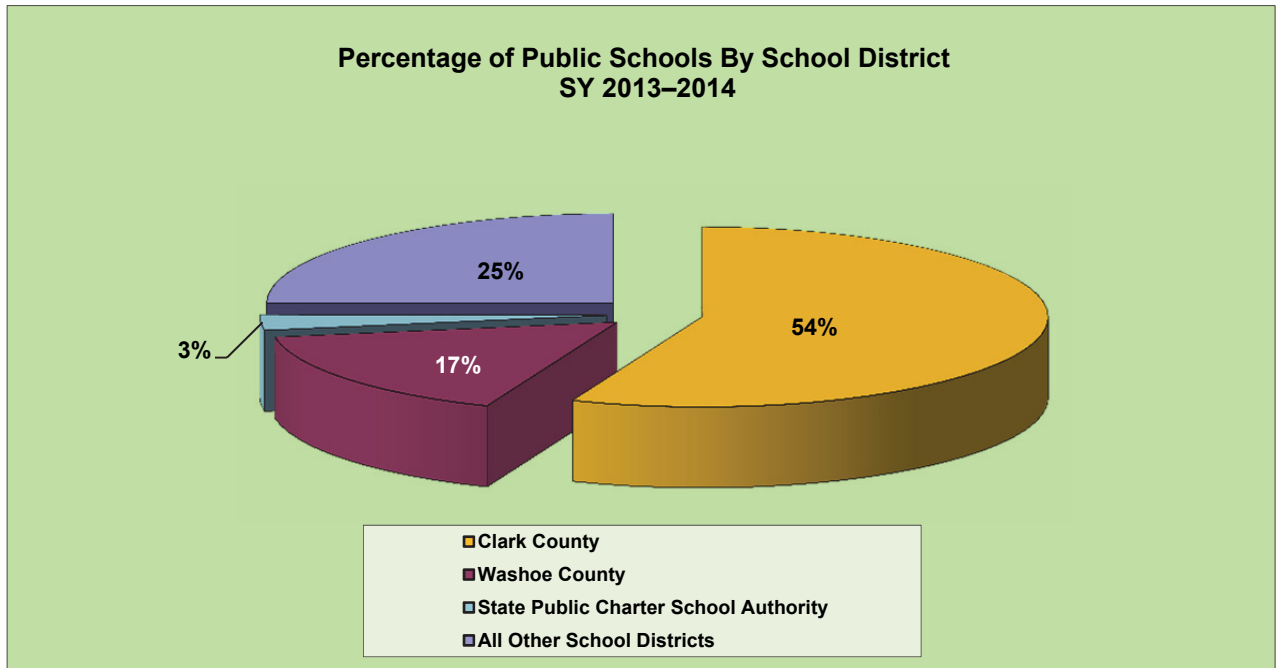
## Nevada's Public Education System—Nevada School Districts

NEVADA'S SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND SUPERINTENDENTS  
SCHOOL YEAR (SY) 2014–2015

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Source: NDE.

## Nevada’s Public Education System—Nevada Schools



**Note:** Public Special Schools decreased from 59 to 27 for SY 2007–2008.

**Source:** NDE, *Nevada Report Card*, October 2014.

## Nevada’s Public Education System—Common Acronyms and Selected Terms

### NEVADA’S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM COMMON ACRONYMS AND SELECTED TERMS

ACT	ACT <sup>®</sup> Exam (American College Test)
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
AP	Advanced Placement (Courses)
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Also see RTTT)
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CBE	Council for Basic Education
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CCSSO	Council of Chief State School Officers
CRT	Criterion-Referenced Test
CSN	College of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas
CSR	Class-Size Reduction
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DOE	Department of Education
DRI	Desert Research Institute
DSA	Distributive School Account
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECS	Education Commission of the States
ED	United States Department of Education (also see USDoE)
ELL	English Language Learners (used interchangeably with ESL and LEP)
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
ESL	English as a Second Language (used interchangeably with ELL and LEP)
ETS	Educational Testing Service
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
FRL	Free and Reduced-Price Lunch
GATE	Gifted and Talented Education
GBC	Great Basin College, Elko
GED	General Education Diploma
GPA	Grade Point Average
HOUSSE	High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (applied to teachers)
HSPE	High School Proficiency Examination
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Federal Special Education Law)
IEP	Individualized Education Program
iNVest	Investing in Nevada’s Education, Students, and Teachers
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems
ITBS	Iowa Test of Basic Skills
LAS	Language Assessment Scales
LBEAPE	Legislative Bureau of Educational Accountability and Program Evaluation
LCE	Legislative Committee on Education
LEA	Local Education Agency (i.e., School District)

**Nevada’s Public Education System—Common Acronyms and Selected Terms**  
*(continued)*

LEP	Limited English Proficient (used interchangeably with ELL and ESL)
LSST	Local School Support Tax
NAC	<i>Nevada Administrative Code</i>
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NASA	Nevada Association of School Administrators
NASB	Nevada Association of School Boards
NASS	Nevada Association of School Superintendents
NBPTS	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
NCATE	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCHEMS	National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
NDE	Nevada’s Department of Education
NEA	National Education Association
NELIP	Nevada Early Literacy Intervention Program
NERA	Nevada Education Reform Act of 1997
NIAA	Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association
NRT	Norm Referenced Test
NSC	Nevada State College
NSEA	Nevada State Education Association
NSHE	Nevada System of Higher Education
NVACS	Nevada Academic Content Standards
NWEA	Northwest Evaluation Association
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSAT	PSAT® Exam
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTO	Parent Teacher Organization
RPDP	Regional Professional Development Program
RTTT	Race to the Top grant program (part of the ARRA)
SAGE	Student Achievement Gap Elimination
SAIN	System of Accountability Information for Nevada
SAT	SAT® Exam
SBAC	Smarter-Balanced Assessment Consortium
SBE	State Board of Education
SEA	State Education Agency (i.e., State Department of Education)
SHEEO	State Higher Education Executive Officers
SIOP	Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol
SIP	School or State Improvement Plan
SLDS	Statewide Longitudinal Data System
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language



## Nevada’s Public Education System—Common Acronyms and Selected Terms (continued)

TMCC	Truckee Meadows Community College, Reno
UNLV	University of Nevada, Las Vegas
UNR	University of Nevada, Reno
USDoE	United States Department of Education (also see ED)
WICHE	Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
WNC	Western Nevada College, Carson City

### Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)

In general, CRTs are tests of academic achievement linked to specific standards or criteria. Such tests measure whether the individual (or group) demonstrate a specific level of skill—either they meet the performance standard or they do not meet it. An example of this type of test would be the Nevada Proficiency Examination. The criteria that are tested are done on a pass-fail basis determining whether or not the student passed the test by meeting a proficiency target cut score. The extent of any comparative data between schools and districts is a report of the percentage of students who passed the test.

### Nevada Education Reform Act

The 1997 Legislature passed a sweeping reform package called the Nevada Education Reform Act. The major components of the Act include: requirements for establishing academic standards and assessments; strengthening school accountability standards; funding for classroom technology; and legislative oversight of the process.

### *The Nevada Plan*

The *Nevada Plan* is the system used to finance elementary and secondary education in the State’s public schools.

### Norm-Referenced Tests (NRTs)

In general, NRTs are tests of academic achievement that measure the skill level of an individual (or the average scores of groups) along a continuum. The well-known bell-curve is an example of how persons score along this scale, with a few showing minimal skills, a few demonstrating advanced understanding, and the great majority falling within a bulge on either side of the middle.

Source: NDE.