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SEPARATE NRTs AND CRTs

If the Committee makes the change in Senate Bill 191 to specify two separate tests, NRTs in grades 4, 8, and 10, and separate CRTs in grades 3 through 8, I would like to have the following assurances for the record, on the part of the districts, the school boards, and the Department of Education:

- That this structure will NOT result in over-testing of students;
- That the Nevada Department of Education can assure us that all the revised CRTs can be pilots and implemented by the 2005-06 school year; and
- That the school districts will use the state CRTs for the purposes they have outlined in their White Paper, which appears to me to effectively replace their own district CRTs (cost savings?).

SPRING VERSUS FALL

If the Committee votes to amend the bill to shift the testing period for the tests from the fall to the spring, this will have a significant impact upon ALL the deadlines the districts and Department will have to meet under the federal law.

I have reviewed the revised Accountability Timeline submitted by the Department of Education and the school districts and I have the following concern:

- With regard to your proposed timeline for school improvement plans, you indicate that the school improvement plans will be revised and/or developed by November 15th, and the plans will begin to be implemented on January 15th, with full implementation beginning the following school year. Staff has received information from the U.S. Department of Education that clarifies that this timeline will NOT satisfy the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. The federal representative assured us that both HR 1 and recent regulations are clear on this issue.

Specifically, Section 6316(b)(3)(C) of the No Child Left Behind Act requires that the plan for improvement be developed AND implemented by the start of the school year after the school year in which the tests were administered. For example, taking your timeline, pupils would take the examinations in spring 2003, and the schools would be identified as demonstrating need for improvement on July 1st. With school beginning sometime in late August, early September of 2003, the plans for improvement for the schools must be developed and be implemented by the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.

This includes the testing company contracted to develop and implement the CRTs to provide results to the Nevada Department of Education in the specified period of 28 days, as noted by the revised accountability timeline.

With this information, are you still requesting an amendment to Senate Bill 191 that would move testing from the fall to the spring?

If yes –

- I want the Department of Education, all superintendents of school districts, the school boards association, and the Nevada State Education Association to provide testimony for the following:

First, that ALL school districts, both urban and rural, will be able to meet the revised timelines. In light of this information, we need your assurance that everyone involved can meet all the deadlines specified under the Act, as amended to spring testing, with regard to federally mandated timelines. Prior to the beginning of the school year, you must:

- Distribute accountability report cards to the public PRIOR to the beginning of the school year after the examinations are administered;
 - Develop, revise, and fully implement school and district improvement plans BY the beginning of the school year after the examinations are administered;
 - Perform any necessary reviews of AYP designation data;
 - Make all needed planning for school choice, supplemental services, or corrective actions for affected schools; and
 - Inform parents about school choice option.
- Further, that you will be able, without any additional cost, perform all these requirements without any additional expense related to these functions being performed over the summer—in other words, that this approach will cost the same, or will be less costly than the processes and deadlines under fall testing?
 - That you are comfortable from changing the system from a diagnostic process to an evaluative process—that you find it useful to know whether a 4th grade student, for example, met 3rd grade requirements, versus finding out what can be done to help the student meet 3rd grade requirements.

- That, in accordance with your White Paper statements and your timeline, that the spring test reports will be delivered to teachers prior to the end of the school year.

QUESTION: How will this help that teacher address the needs of the student or the class as a whole in the short time remaining?

- Further, that the schools districts will be able to deliver the individual student scores to the teacher that has them the following year. Also, that under your position as contained in the White Paper, that the teacher will have the time and opportunity to address the individual needs of that student and the collective needs of the classroom.

QUESTION: How likely will a teacher change his or her lesson plans, based upon the results of students that were taught by other teachers the previous year?

- That you are comfortable with the fact that parents will not know until the end of the school year about how their child has been performing on a test of state standards until the very end or possibly after the end of the school year?
- Although I understand you might be giving preliminary indications to parents, I would like your assurances that you are comfortable providing parents at affected schools with formal notice concerning their ability to choose the school their child will be attending for the next school year, only two or three weeks prior to the beginning of the school year.
- That the teachers' association is aware of why this state selected fall testing in the first place, and is comfortable with the implications that spring testing might have as a reflection upon the performance of an individual teacher.

(If agreement is received from all parties):

- I request that the Department of Education and school districts provide revised accountability timeline dates to be included in Senate Bill 191. Staff should receive these no later than Monday, April 7, 2003. In providing this information, I would stress that the timelines comply with the requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act because the state Legislature cannot enact a bill that does not comply with federal requirements.

HR&F/Misc/SB191Assurances