

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-Third Session
May 4, 2005**

The Committee on Education was called to order at 3:51 p.m., on Wednesday, May 4, 2005. Chairwoman Bonnie Parnell presided in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada, and, via simultaneous videoconference, in Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. All exhibits are available and on file at the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Bonnie Parnell, Chairwoman
Mrs. Debbie Smith, Vice Chairwoman
Mr. Kelvin Atkinson
Mr. Joe Hardy
Mr. Brooks Holcomb
Mr. William Horne
Mr. Garn Mabey
Mr. Mark Manendo
Mr. Bob McCleary
Mr. Harvey J. Munford

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mrs. Sharron Angle (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristin Roberts, Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel
Carol Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst
Rachel Pilliod, Committee Manager
Paul Partida, Committee Attaché

OTHERS PRESENT:

Bill Hanlon, Regional Director, Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (SNRPDP)

Chairwoman Parnell:

[Meeting called to order and roll called.] I'll open the hearing on S.B. 368.

Senate Bill 368 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions regarding professional development of teachers and administrators. (BDR 34-1092)

Bill Hanlon, Regional Director, Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (SNRPDP):

I'm here to support S.B. 368. The RPDPs [Regional Professional Development Programs] were developed to ensure teachers were aware of the State's academic standards created by the Council to Establish Academic Standards and to provide high-quality professional development so teachers could teach better to those standards. This results in increased student achievement. To accomplish this, the RPDPs offer professional development that is typically content-based, but has embedded instructional assessment strategies as well as strategies to address the needs of special populations, such as poverty, special education, and ELLs [English language learners]. To further support teachers, the RPDPs also advocate structures that support increased student achievement. Those structures include knowing the state academic standards, components of effective lesson, teacher expectancies, and what we refer to as the Backward Assessment Model.

We believe that professional development models are better utilized to teachers sharing their understanding of content and instructional strategies. Nationwide, 70 percent of the teachers would much rather be in the classroom teaching than attending a professional development activity. That is quite an indictment on professional development. The question has to be asked: "Why would teachers not prefer to go to professional development?" The answer is fairly simple. Most of the professional development that teachers attend does not address what they do, how they do it, student performance, and/or changes that result in increased student achievement.

Teachers are very well educated. They are hard working, they are caring, and they are dedicated employees. They come to work early. They stay late. They spend their own money to make sure that their own students have success.

They don't teach for the money; they teach because of the job itself. We owe it to those people and to the students to provide them with opportunities to grow and to gain by each others' experiences—to provide the best educational experience possible for their own students.

[Bill Hanlon, continued.] Currently, most school systems have a peer method system put in place when new teachers come on board. What they do is take their teachers out to the end of the pier, they have them look out, and they push them off. They either sink or they swim. We advocate a peer system. This is where teachers, when coming into our schools sit down with teachers like themselves, and talk about what they teach and when they are going to teach it. When students have difficulties, you overcome those difficulties, and share in resources on how you test those kids—a sharing and communication model. Education research for over a decade has clearly stated that professional development should be:

- regularly scheduled
- onsite
- ongoing
- the discipline that teachers teach
- content in pedagogy has teachers as active participants

It goes without saying that professional development should occur as close to the time that teachers are going to use it as possible. In southern Nevada, we have advocated the Backward Assessment Model (BAM), because it is a communication model that allows for teachers to work with each other. In fact, the BAM requires teachers to meet by grade or subject level to discuss their job. I'd like to share with you a professional development agenda ([Exhibit B](#)) that we have advocated for a number of years. I'd like you to look at this model. It clearly has the teachers working with each other to discuss what they do, how they do it, their students' performance, and strategies that they would change which would result in increased student performance.

WestEd is a contractor hired by the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) to evaluate the RPDs. What is interesting is that in their evaluations that they have done for the last six years, they have continually noted a deficiency when they do classroom observations and they interview teachers. For instance, WestEd has repeatedly reported that teachers do not identify areas in which students, traditionally, have difficulty. If you look on the agenda ([Exhibit B](#)), you can see that is item E. They do not share, which is item F. For letter J, they don't identify students or identify plans to remediate those students. And worst of all, WestEd has identified item K as something we are not doing, and that is identifying what instructional practices you'll change for next year to correct those deficiencies and improve student achievement.

[Bill Hanlon, continued.] Here is an agenda that we have been advocating, which would have teachers talking about their jobs. The fact is that building principals have their teachers doing other things rather than working on what I believe to be the most important—the academic standards. We survey the teachers, and we do this at the end of every year. Last year, we surveyed, and about 6,700 teachers responded. We asked them the questions that are directly related to this professional development agenda. One of the questions is, “By grade or subject level, teachers discussed areas on which students traditionally experienced difficulty.” They had to respond. Here is the good news: three years ago, 29 percent of the teachers said that they did that. Two years ago, 31 percent of the teachers said that they did that. Now, we are up to 38 percent. This is a nice trend line. This tells me that two out of the three are still not doing it.

Another question taken from the professional development agenda: “Teachers shared content knowledge and successful teaching strategies, experiences, resources, and materials to increase student achievement.” Three years ago, it was 22 percent. Two years ago, it was 24 percent. Last year, it went to 28 percent—again, another nice trend line where we are having increased activity, but it’s still 28 percent. Teachers identified strategies and/or interventions to address areas in which students have difficulties on district, state, or national tests. Again, the trend line is 25, 27, to 31 percent, which is nice, but two out of every three are not doing that. That corresponds to what WestEd is finding in the evaluations.

The point that I bring to you is that the professional development days are the responsibilities of the school districts, which have turned them over to the individual schools. The idea behind the professional development days was that we were going to allow teachers to share their content knowledge and instructional strategies. The best example I can give you was about one and a half months ago, when my third grade granddaughter came over to my house for help with subtraction. What was interesting was that my granddaughter was subtracting by strictly memorizing the facts and counting off her fingers. I said, “Honey, there is a better way.” I explained to her that if you subtract consecutive numbers—like 13 minus 4 or 15 minus 6—that answer is always 9. She said, “Granddaddy, ‘consecutive’ is too big of a word for third grade.”

I told her to take a look at this: if you subtract consecutive even numbers, or consecutive odd numbers—like 13 minus 5, 17 minus 9, or 16 minus 8—the answer is always 8. She quickly caught on. She is eight. She can look at a sheet and find out all of the answers that are either 8 or 9. All of a sudden, “consecutive” was part of her vocabulary. My point is that we have been teaching teachers that for a number of years. Not only do we teach it, we

publicize it. We publicize book strategies for learning math facts. My point is that we have been teaching that for six years.

[Bill Hanlon, continued.] As a parent and a grandparent, I had this expectation. What is going on with these teachers? Why aren't they teaching these things? I'm thinking, who is responsible for that? It dawned on me. I was. Here we are teaching it, but when we teach teachers these things, if they don't have the opportunity to go back to their schools and share this information, I may as well just take my head and bang it against the wall. The idea is not to make math more difficult or whatever subject it is more difficult, but give them some ways of learning it. That is what we try to do—not only in terms of instructional strategies such as that, but in content.

The professional development days are just not being used the way they ought to be used. In my opinion, the professional development days are being squandered. I know they are being used for good things. The idea in my head for the professional development days was to exchange content knowledge and instructional strategies that would result in increased student achievement. I'm tunnel-visioned there. If you want to offer something that I think is important, I understand the importance of it. If the days are meant to increase student achievement, then I think that is what we should concentrate on. If you just look at the current scheduling of those days, it makes a mockery of professional development.

Professional development should be, in my opinion, based upon the standards created by the Council to Establish Academic Standards, and not just the standards that are tested by the State. I have real concerns when we have narrowed the curriculum like Texas has. I would like the intent of this legislation, without actually prescribing it, that professional development should be scheduled more appropriately to benefit the academic achievement of students, and it should be based upon all academic standards. One of the problems that I currently have is that some standards are hard to test. The very standards that are the hardest to test are the ones that, in my opinion, are the most important. They lend themselves to understanding and reconstructing knowledge.

If you were to ask me right now what the sine of 30 degrees is, I'll be honest with you—I can't tell you. If you give me 10 seconds, I can tell you. I know how it was defined and I know how it was developed. The way we teach—because people are just teaching isolated standards that are tested—our students, when they graduate high school, would never know that the cosine squared plus the sine squared equals one, which is the Pythagorean Theorem. They would never know the equation of a circle is the Pythagorean Theorem.

They would never know that the distance formula is the Pythagorean Theorem. They wouldn't know, because the processes that are in the State standards are not being taught, because they are not being tested.

[Bill Hanlon, continued.] I have no doubt in my own belief that for most students, it is not going to be a matter of if they are going to forget, it is going to be a matter of when they are going to forget. If they have no way to reconstruct that knowledge, because they had no understanding, then that knowledge is gone. I think you can see that reflected on how our students perform on high stakes tests, such as the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). I would like professional development days to resemble what the research and what common sense clearly state. That is an agenda that looks like this ([Exhibit B](#))—that has teachers meet by greater subject level to discuss what they teach, how they are teaching it, how their students are performing, changes in instructional strategies that will result in increased student achievement, and that teachers would be actively involved in this.

Assemblyman Hardy:

I think this goes further than students. It works for legislators too. I had this conversation today with a lobbyist. I said that you have to email me something. He said that he did that last week, and I told him, "That is my point." You have to get some proximity to the thing. That is one of the reasons why they pass out this agenda when I'm sitting here, so that I can go through it, even though I don't know what the R of the RPDP, or the P, or the second P, means. That is the concept that we are looking at. I've become aware of some of the criticisms of the math instruction.

Let's pretend there was a county named Clark and there was a school district therein, and there were people who didn't pass the math portion of the required test to get out of high school with a diploma. One of the criticisms that I've heard—that I do not know how true or whatever—is that we don't teach geometry in a mandatory way in Clark County School District (CCSD), but we do in other school districts.

I go back to my experience with geometry. One of the things that I hated about geometry is that it made you think. I didn't want to think, but that was the whole process. The process of geometry is the analytical organization of thoughts and how you do it. I can't spell Pythagorean, because I tried to look it up the other day. That is the process, how you work through that. Is alleged lack of geometry one of the challenges that we have, because we haven't talked about that process that you referenced? We may have the fact, but we don't have the process. Don't have the process, and we'll forget the fact.

Bill Hanlon:

It is my opinion that you don't need a full-fledged geometry class to pass the proficiency exam in geometry. I would tell you that one of the problems we have in mathematics is vocabulary acquisition. The kids don't understand the vocabulary, and then when they come across questions, they don't know what is being asked. I'm not talking about ELL students. You need to understand in math that we use words like "operation," meaning add, subtract, multiply, and divide. Sometimes kids come in thinking about surgery. We talk about the "mean," and they are thinking about some bad person down the street. We are thinking about a measure of central tendency. We talk about "median," and they are talking about the middle stripe on the streets, as opposed to the middle score. We talk about "volume." We are thinking about capacity, and they are thinking about their radio.

The greatest problem that we have in mathematics is vocabulary acquisition. There is no more single important factor to student achievement than the understanding of vocabulary. Vocabulary is not a state standard that is tested. If, in fact, we say that we value language acquisition, and you don't test it, I'll guarantee you that kids won't know it. Kids have to know things, like when they see words that end in "er"—faster, shorter, taller, and quicker. Words that end in "er" would generally indicate to me that I have a subtraction problem. If you don't teach that, I don't know how kids are going to get it.

Kids need to know when they see words like one "per" or "each" that this is going to be a division problem. If somebody says, "How many different ways can this be done?" They have to realize that is a multiplication problem. If you don't teach the vocabulary, and then you wonder why kids can answer a question, then you may as well be speaking a foreign language. Since vocabulary is not a tested state standard, it is not being taught very well. It is being introduced but not taught. That impacts student achievement.

Assemblywoman Smith:

Do you think this is going to make a difference?

Bill Hanlon:

The intent of this, in my opinion, was always that the professional development days would provide teachers an opportunity to go back and share with each other their content knowledge, instructional strategies, and resources. I will tell that it hurts, from my standpoint, if I'm supposed to provide professional development and I can only provide professional development to people who want to attend. I always had an expectation that these teachers would go back to their schools, and on professional development days that are provided by the State—and that is at an indirect cost of about \$20 million to \$30 million, since

you are already investing about \$10 million in what we do—you'd like to think that what we are advocating and recommending would be brought back to the schools and people would share.

[Bill Hanlon, continued.] In my opinion, in too many instances, principals do not allow teachers to sit and talk about their job. That is exactly what we want them to do. I have an expectation that if I'm teaching fractions and my kids aren't performing well, but your kids are, you might tell me what you are doing or show me some of the resources. There is that sharing. That was the intent of this. What has occurred is that there are a lot of needs out there, and these professional development days have been used for other purposes. We are currently doing the survey that I shared with you, and I think that so far, we have about 2,500 responses. The teachers can't tell the difference between the professional development offered by the RPDP and the school districts. We try to be seamless. There are times that I wish we weren't seamless. The RPDPs have nothing to do with the scheduling of the professional development days or what happens on those days at the schools.

On the survey, I read a very well written paragraph about Bill Hanlon being the antichrist because of what they have to do on these professional development days, which have nothing to do with what I'm doing and, clearly, nothing to do with what they think they are doing. That is bothersome. The idea is that you want to raise student achievement. You have a well-educated workforce that cares. They come to work early, they stay late, and they spend their own money. What else could I want in a workforce? Then, I don't give them the opportunity to share? Attorneys share, doctors share, and trash men share. We can't do that in education, and I don't want to accept that as a rule.

Assemblywoman Smith:

Are you really getting to what you want to get to in this bill? Are you really saying what you want in this bill? Is there something else or something more that we should do? I feel like there is an underlying current. I know there is.

Bill Hanlon:

On the Senate side, I had introduced an amendment that was very prescribed. My own opinion was that it was going to pass, but on a partisan basis. I don't see this as partisan, so I pulled it. We made some modifications in language. I think you ought to do what is right, because it is right. I understand that the principals need some flexibility. The school districts need some flexibility. In my opinion, the State spending about \$10 million in direct costs for the RPDPs and another \$20 million to \$30 million by allowing school districts to use professional development days rather than having instruction is quite an investment. I would like to think that the things we are showing teachers, that

they actually had an opportunity to go back and talk to their same grade level teachers. If they are third grade teachers, work with the third grade teachers. If they are algebra teachers, work with the algebra teachers. The chemistry teachers work with the other chemistry teachers, so that we share that collective knowledge, wisdom, and resources.

[Bill Hanlon, continued.] I would like to see the intent that professional development days are not offered on Fridays for three-day weekends before Memorial Day. I'm not sure what you are going to be doing the Friday before Memorial Day, but my guess is that most of you are not going to be thinking about the next legislative session. You are going to be thinking about going home next week. When the teachers have professional development days and they go home the next week, I'm not sure how good that professional development day is. I would tell you that if I were having a professional development day the Friday before a three-day weekend and I'm out of school the next week, my thought is on what golf course is open that day, because that is where I'm going.

Assemblywoman Smith:

I didn't mean to put you on the spot. I think you know how much I support professional development and how much I support the idea that we remain focused on the standards. I'm trying to get to what we really need to accomplish. I want to get to where we need to be.

Bill Hanlon:

I think teachers need to be more involved. That is what the research says. There are all kinds of professional development. We offer stuff in publication, online, on video, and things of that nature. We do it in person, we do it on polycoms, and we try to hit them in a number of different ways. There was one way that we could make sure teachers could share, that they would go back to their schools, and if they attended something, they could say, "Look at what I learned." I'm sure principals are very concerned that they don't want to lose their flexibility, but at the same time, I think they've lost sight of what a professional development day is supposed to be.

If that guy would tell you—most of the teachers when I look at the surveys and the comments that are made—it is bothersome. It's the little things, like a strategy for learning subtraction facts, showing kids a simpler way of finding a common denominator, showing them how to add fractions in their heads, or showing them the connections between what they do in basic math and what they are doing in algebra, so that kids are more comfortable in a language that is being used, and so that teachers have an opportunity to review and reinforce

basic skills. Kids get to see it in different context. They get to also compare and contrast the ideas that they are learning.

[Bill Hanlon, continued.] All of these, the research says, lead to increased student achievement. We are just not allowing schools to do that. Although I have not talked to Assemblyman Munford, my guess is that he was a teacher last year and my guess is that he'd probably have a better understanding of what he did on a professional development day than I do. Most teachers—70 percent nationwide—would rather be out doing something else. I can understand why, because I would be one of them if this was being done to me.

Assemblyman Holcomb:

My wife has been teaching for 30 years, and you are correct. Teachers want to teach. Teachers love teaching. Teachers want to instill knowledge in their children. The secret to the success of educating children is parent involvement. If parents are involved in the education of the children, the children are going to achieve. The children are going to apply themselves. It is application. It makes the job of the teachers very easy. She said that when she sees the children where the parents aren't involved, it is very iffy. It makes her job very difficult.

You did make a comment that I wanted to ask you about. About the Pythagorean Theorem: don't they teach his theory, or is it just the word Pythagorean?

Bill Hanlon:

The formulas that I gave you: the cosine squared plus the sine squared is the Pythagorean Theorem. It is taught in isolation. It sounds like it is something over there. The equation of a circle is, in fact, the Pythagorean Theorem written differently because it is taught in different context. The distance formula is the Pythagorean Theorem, just written differently because it is taught in a different context. My point is that if a student took the Pythagorean Theorem, how could a kid graduate high school not knowing the Pythagorean Theorem if the teachers told them that they had taught them the Pythagorean Theorem in the sixth grade, we did the distance formula in the seventh grade—and I introduced it by using the Pythagorean Theorem—then I went and taught you the equation of a circle when we did the conic sections in algebra and introduced that by the Pythagorean Theorem, and then, when I got to trigonometry, introduced the trig identities using the Pythagorean Theorem?

You couldn't graduate not knowing the Pythagorean Theorem if these connections were made. The fact is when students say that they forget something, it is because they learned it in isolation. If I asked you, for instance, "What is the area of a trapezoid?" You happened to have forgotten that. If you

know that a trapezoid came from combining two triangles, then you'd have a better opportunity to be able to find the area of a trapezoid because you know where it came from. Most people wouldn't know that the area of a trapezoid came from a triangle, a triangle came from a parallelogram, a parallelogram came from a rectangle, and a rectangle came from counting the number of squares.

[Bill Hanlon, continued.] They were saying, "Memorize this formula, memorize that formula, and memorize this one." They just memorize a bunch of stuff, which over time, in my opinion, is going to be forgotten. If you want kids to remember over time for a HSPE or an ACT® and SAT®, then they have to be able to have some way of reconstructing that forgotten knowledge. That is not going to happen if all you do is teach State standards that are tested and you don't teach the process standards that lead to the understanding, application, and the ability to reconstruct.

Chairwoman Parnell:

When you were talking about the teachers that do come to your professional development days, don't all new teachers have to attend so many sessions?

Bill Hanlon:

No. The RPDP has nothing to do with the five professional development days that are provided by the State. Those are district controlled and, typically, school operated. We are not involved in those at all. I would tell you that a lot of teachers think we are, but we are not. We are asked from time to time to come in and do things at those. I ask my people not to do a whole lot of that, because that is showtime. I could go up there and entertain the troops for an hour or two. I can tell them all of my math jokes and make people feel good. Our attitude is that the professional development should be ongoing. We want to increase their content knowledge and instructional strategies. I'm not much into the one-shot professional development. From time to time we do that.

Chairwoman Parnell:

Do they get any credit? Say that you had a professional development that you were organizing; do you ever have something that is a Friday night and all day Saturday where they can pick up one-half of a credit and have it be to your heart's desire—purely academic in their field?

Bill Hanlon:

Almost everything we do is content-based and aimed at a particular grade cluster. We have middle school math and middle school teachers, we have algebra for algebra teachers, we have biology for biology teachers, we have social studies for social studies teachers, and kindergarten for kindergarten

reading teachers, and I would tell you that probably 99 percent get university credit.

Chairwoman Parnell:

Back in my teaching days, that was always a reason to go. It put it on a more serious level and you wanted to go. You needed to get those credits, and it was a good way to get that information.

Bill Hanlon:

We don't have a problem with that. The problem that I am discussing is that when all teachers have professional development on these professional development days, that if they did go to our trainings—that could be during school, but they are mostly after school and on weekends or holidays—when they went back to the schools, the people that didn't attend would also have the opportunity to share some of this information.

Assemblyman Munford:

I'd have to say that you are very accurate in your observations based on teacher attendance and going through these various development days. You are right; they always fell on a holiday. Teachers always tried to avoid them. In some buildings, they do make it mandatory for first-year teachers, but many veteran teachers would use their sick leave days that day and had a special day off. I do support you in the fact that I think they are very important and valuable. I think teachers should work together and share their methods, ideas, and things that they have. Sometimes, teachers have a tendency to think if someone goes to another teacher and asks them for help, or the teacher that is chosen to share their information with them—they have a tendency to look down on the other teacher that didn't quite have the standard that they have in their class. There is a little ego thing there sometimes.

Some teachers just shy away. They think their styles and methods are just as good. They think that they don't need anyone to tell them or share anything with them. There are a lot of things that play into these teacher development days. They think that they don't need anyone else to tell them. It is really a common practice with veteran teachers. They have ways and they don't want to surrender their ways. They think they have been successful with those ways for X number of years. It is difficult for them to see and appreciate those professional development days. I always thought that they had some quality. I usually attended them. I will be an advocate for you to continue to push for them. I think they do have merit.

Bill Hanlon:

My hope is that there is legislative intent that these days be used according to what the research says: this is when teachers teach, content pedagogy with teachers as active participants, using an agenda such as the one I provided ([Exhibit B](#)), and having a day scheduled approximate to the time that the teacher is going to be using the material. I am really bothered when a legislator would ask me, "What good are you? You are supposed to be providing teachers professional development that leads to increased student achievement." We don't do it by school, we do it by region. It is very hard to show that. When teachers can't even go back and share what they have at times that they are scheduled to do so, it is bothersome to me. It leads me to believe that we are squandering these opportunities, which are costing us indirectly either four or five days of instruction and/or millions of dollars, however you want to look at it.

Assemblyman Munford:

How many development days are there? I think that we have four per year, don't we?

Bill Hanlon:

The State allows five days. There are some districts that use four days. There are other districts that will use one full day and then eight half days. How it is being done is different around the state. How seriously they are being used or what they are being used for is probably different around the state too.

Chairwoman Parnell:

[Closed the hearing on [S.B. 368](#).] While you are here, I want to toss this idea out. This has been an idea of mine for about two months. I'm not quite sure where to take it. It applies to the math class. It seems to me that we have our students taking the HSPE for the first time as a sophomore. Much of the complaint has been that they will be asked questions in the math portion that they have not yet had. I'd love to see a ninth grade math class that had a quarter of basic, a quarter of algebra, a quarter of geometry, and a quarter of calculus. This would give students that overview. It would be my hope that a student that had never thought about taking a higher placement math class—if they took it in that format—might enjoy the class and get it. They might want to do it. Plus, you are giving all of those ninth graders a base review and a little information that at least covers the subjects that they find on that math portion. That is just for anyone involved in setting the State standard. I think it is something that we might want to look at. Hopefully, it would excite kids about areas of math that they might otherwise not ever think that they would be excited about.

Assembly Committee on Education
May 4, 2005
Page 14

Senate Bill 459 (1st Reprint): Requires instruction in financial responsibility in public high schools. (BDR 34-1093)

Not heard.

Chairwoman Parnell:

We do stand adjourned [at 4:31 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Paul Partida
Committee Attaché

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chairwoman

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: May 4, 2005

Time of Meeting: 3:51 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A	*****	Agenda
	B	Bill Hanlon / SNRPDP	Outline for RPDP agenda