

Primary Priority: Teacher Vacancies

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Nevada official laments teacher, staff shortages ahead of back-to-school season

Thousands of teaching jobs are vacant across the state.

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CCSD working 'feverishly' to fill vacant teacher positions



Nevada
Business
The economic leader's insight

Nevada Workforce Evolving with Economy, Crucial to Development

The Problem.

The chronic teacher vacancies in Nevada represent a major crisis. Currently, CCSD has a significant number of vacancies, and it's projected that over the next ten years, Clark County alone will need 14,000 more teachers, with a total of 19,000 needed statewide. CCEA believes there are two main reasons for the vacancy crisis:

The first is a lack of real investment in developing the future workforce. Nevada has not invested enough in innovation and diversification, resulting in a high unemployment rate. Although Nevada's leadership has taken steps to modernize the economy and workforce development system, the Covid pandemic has highlighted the need for further work to be done. Nevada leaders are now looking to take on the challenges that continue to hinder the state's economic success by focusing on a more coordinated effort. Ultimately, it is our children who bear the weight of this because when we settle for lower standards, students simply don't learn.

The second is an issue of recruitment, and retention. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped 35% since 2010 and completion of these programs has dropped 28% in the same timeframe. This creates a leaky pipeline where teachers are attracted to the profession but leave before being recruited for a position. Currently, only 67% of CCSD hires come from Nevada's teacher pipeline, contributing significantly to the high vacancies. Additionally, Nevada faces an attrition problem where CCSD lost more teachers in the 2021-22 school year than ever before.

The Solution.

Just as the problems driving this vacancy crisis are two-fold, so too are the solutions CCEA will be advocating for in the upcoming legislative session—and we believe the state has the responsibility of joining us in these efforts:

First, we need to build a Nevada teacher pipeline, starting in Clark County. CCEA, in collaboration with Columbia University and the Center for Public Research and Leadership, has developed, and is proposing, the creation of such a pipeline through a Teacher Academy College Pathway in Clark County. Not only would such teacher academies address our teacher vacancy crisis in CCSD, but they would also serve as a model for other school districts across the state to implement and a tool for workforce development across many of the industries that represent the future of our economy in southern Nevada.

Second, when it comes to better recruiting and retaining educators, we have to make salaries and the conditions of employment appealing for existing employees to stay and also to better compete with other school districts to attract new teachers to the district. Nevada competes with other school districts in the Western United States for teachers. The starting rate of pay is no longer competitive with Southern California, Texas, Arizona, the state of Washington etc. Addressing this gap needs to be a high priority.

1. Career Pathways and Teacher Pipeline. We need to build a Nevada teacher pipeline while at the same time making state investments in developing our workforce for a diversified economy in Southern Nevada. We can achieve both those goals through the creation of a career pathways—a series of structured and connected work-related educational opportunities and activities for K-16 through employment, enabling individuals to prepare for and develop successfully in high-quality jobs that will sustain them and will contribute productively to the needs of the community and society—and the specific development of a teacher pipeline within that framework.

The Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) is well-suited to enhance the state's workforce development through various efforts. CCEA is proposing a GOED-led plan to link economic and workforce development data for planning purposes, establish measurable expectations for career pathways outcomes, hold educational institutions, industry and other stakeholders accountable for results, and adapt based on projected needs and demonstrated outcomes.

A GOED-led plan to achieve this should align career pathways with GOED's economic development planning, implement a career pathways demonstration project, and designate K-12 education as an economic development priority by implementing teacher academies in every high school in CCSD. This will allow students to acquire dual credit and automatic enrollment in an NSHE institution, with tuition abatement to incentivize them to go into the practice, as well as help in reaching the goal of a more developed and diversified economy.

CCEA is proposing the development of Teacher Academy College Pathway, which aligns K-12 education with higher education and workforce development opportunities as a demonstration of the potential this framework has for workforce development.

As designed, the program will be offered to students at all CCSD high schools beginning in their sophomore year. Students will have the opportunity to earn college credits (up to 12) that will be accepted at NSHE institutions, as well as participate in internships at CCSD schools. Upon successful completion of the Pathway, students will be admitted to an NSHE institution to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Education. NSHE students will also be offered employment as paraprofessionals in CCSD schools to alleviate financial barriers. Successful graduates of the Pathway will receive full tuition forgiveness if they agree to serve as educators in Title I public schools and will receive an early offer to teach in CCSD schools.

In short, Nevada is facing a crucial moment in regards to workforce development. The state can choose to continue with the current efforts and maintain the status quo, redirect workforce development resources elsewhere, or use the foundation already laid to create a vision, plan, and design for transformative workforce development practices that will better serve the people, particularly children, of Nevada. This could be achieved by aligning K-16 education, K-12 educators, and economic development to support the growth of the state.

- 2. Recruitment and Retention.** We need to address compensation by significantly increasing salaries for all educators—classroom teachers as well as other needed licensed professionals—making the profession more attractive. CCEA believes all starting salaries for educators in CCSD should be \$60,000 per year, and we are also advocating for an immediate salary adjustment of 10% for all veteran educators.

At the same time, we also need to address working conditions by reducing class sizes to more manageable levels for classroom teachers. Recruitment and class size reduction are inseparable; we simply cannot address working conditions by reducing class sizes if there are no teachers to hire. For example, if Nevada were to limit each of its existing district classrooms to their required target ratios, 16% of K-3 students across Nevada—19,188 students—would not have a classroom.

For other licensed professionals, we need to reign in caseloads. Mentally healthy children are more successful in school and life. The COVID pandemic highlighted the urgent need to address student mental health in our schools with 18 student suicides within 9 months (2020). Although state and local education agencies have publicly prioritized mental health supports, the caseloads experienced by mental health professionals (school counselors, psychologists, social workers) hinder the ability to intervene when students are in need of mental health support and wraparound services.

Finally, for all our educators, we need to relieve the administrative burdens that contribute to unnecessarily high workloads overall. To illustrate the point further, a recent study by Brookings estimates that the average student loses between 16% and 25% of their learning time due to interrupted instruction (administrative duties, outside interruptions), equating to a full fourth of their instructional time.