

NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation



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Supporting Success for All Students through Local School Board Leadership



A Message from NASB's President



I am dedicating this month's President Message to sharing with you my favorite inspirational poem, "The Race." This poem has been attributed to Dr. D.H. "Dee" Groberg. Some of you know that I am something of a runner and have completed several marathons. It seems to me appropriate to compare the story told in this poem with our own time as we enter a new Session of the Nevada Legislature and as matters at the national level swirl in Washington, D.C. This poem helps me keep centered about the importance of the work that we do each day as school board members.

*Whenever I start to hang my head in front of failure's face,
my downward fall is broken by the memory of a race.
A children's race, young boys, young men; how I remember well,
excitement sure, but also fear, it wasn't hard to tell.
They all lined up so full of hope, each thought to win that race
or tie for first, or if not that, at least take second place.
Their parents watched from off the side, each cheering for their son,
and each boy hoped to show his folks that he would be the one.*

*The whistle blew and off they flew, like chariots of fire,
to win, to be the hero there, was each young boy's desire.
One boy in particular, whose dad was in the crowd,
was running in the lead and thought "My dad will be so proud."
But as he speeded down the field and crossed a shallow dip,
the little boy who thought he'd win, lost his step and slipped.
Trying hard to catch himself, his arms flew everywhere,
and midst the laughter of the crowd he fell flat on his face.*

*As he fell, his hope fell too; he couldn't win it now.
Humiliated, he just wished to disappear somehow.
But as he fell his dad stood up and showed his anxious face,
which to the boy so clearly said, "Get up and win that race!"
He quickly rose, no damage done, behind a bit that's all,
and ran with all his mind and might to make up for his fall.
So anxious to restore himself, to catch up and to win,
his mind went faster than his legs. He slipped and fell again.
He wished that he had quit before with only one disgrace.
"I'm hopeless as a runner now, I shouldn't try to race."*

*But through the laughing crowd he searched and found his father's face
with a steady look that said again, "Get up and win that race!"*

NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

So he jumped up to try again, ten yards behind the last.
"If I'm to gain those yards," he thought, "I've got to run real fast!"
Exceeding everything he had, he regained eight, then ten...
but trying hard to catch the lead, he slipped and fell again.
Defeat! He lay there silently. A tear dropped from his eye.
"There's no sense running anymore! Three strikes I'm out! Why try?
I've lost, so what's the use?" he thought. "I'll live with my disgrace."
But then he thought about his dad, who soon he'd have to face.

"Get up," an echo sounded low, "you haven't lost at all,
for all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall.
Get up!" the echo urged him on, "Get up and take your place!
You were not meant for failure here! Get up and win that race!"
So, up he rose to run once more, refusing to forfeit,
and he resolved that win or lose, at least he wouldn't quit.
So far behind the others now, the most he'd ever been,
still he gave it all he had and ran like he could win.
Three times he'd fallen stumbling, three times he rose again.
Too far behind to hope to win, he still ran to the end.

They cheered another boy who crossed the line and won first place,
head high and proud and happy -- no falling, no disgrace.
But, when the fallen youngster crossed the line, in last place,
the crowd gave him a greater cheer for finishing the race.
And even though he came in last with head bowed low, unproud,
you would have thought he'd won the race, to listen to the crowd.
And to his dad he sadly said, "I didn't do so well."
"To me, you won," his father said. "You rose each time you fell."

And now when things seem dark and bleak and difficult to face,
the memory of that little boy helps me in my own race.
For all of life is like that race, with ups and downs and all.
And all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall.
And when depression and despair shout loudly in my face,
another voice within me says, "Get up and win that race!"

Thank you for all you do each day to increase opportunities for learning and achievement for all of our Nevada students attending public schools throughout the seventeen school districts.

Sincerely,
Wade Poulsen
NASB President



Research—Young Girls Less Likely to Think of Women as Smart

The Washington Post (1/26, Anderson) reports that according to research (1/27) published Thursday by Science magazine, "girls as young as 6 years old are less likely than boys to label people of their own gender as 'really, really smart.'" The Post reports the study "raises questions about how stereotypical notions of male and female mental abilities shape the paths students take in life." Researchers said the results "suggest that gender stereotypes about brainpower take root at a pivotal point in childhood — around first grade — and can profoundly influence academic and career choices long afterward."

	NASB Directors and Executive Committee
	Joint Teleconference
	February 27 at 700pm

NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

The AP (1/26, Danilova) reports the research "suggests that girls as young as 6 can be led to believe men are inherently smarter and more talented than women, making girls less motivated to pursue novel activities or ambitious careers."

The AP quotes coauthor Andrei Cimpian, associate professor in the psychology department at New York University, saying, "As a society, we associate a high level of intellectual ability with males more than females, and our research suggests that this association is picked up by children as young 6 and 7." The AP describes the study's methodology, noting that at younger ages, girls are more likely to see members of their own gender as superlatively intelligent. "But as they became older and began attending school, children apparently began endorsing gender stereotypes."

The Huffington Post (1/26) reports that the research "sheds new light on girls' ability to defy stereotypes about fields traditionally dominated by men, particularly careers in math and the sciences." Researcher Lin Bian, a doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "said the results show an urgent need to intervene in children's education 'as early as possible' before gendered notions about what girls and boys can accomplish set in."

NPR (1/26) reports that the study comes "amid a push to figure out why women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, fields." [For the original research article in Science, January 27, 2017, please use this link:

<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/355/6323/389.full>]



Best Practices—Getting Kids to School

By Dylan Peers McCoy

Getting kids to school can be hard: They miss the bus. Their families are evicted. They have dentist appointments.

Some days it's trivial issues that keep kids home. Other times it's steeper challenges. But a growing body of research shows that when students are chronically absent from school, they are much more likely to face problems with everything from learning to read to graduating high school.

That's why Indianapolis Public Schools is investing in a new program aimed at boosting attendance at schools across the district.

School districts across the country are paying extra attention to improving attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism in recent years. Indiana is one of many states that now require schools to track chronic absence, and districts from Grand Rapids to Milwaukee are tackling the challenge of tracking and reducing absences.

In Indianapolis, the effort started in 2015-2016, and it ranges from rewards for kids who have perfect attendance to targeted help for students who miss 18 days of school or more. It's being rolled out with the help of eight new graduation counselors, who are tasked with making sure struggling students don't fall through the cracks.

"People want to spend a lot of time talking about more in-depth strategies for reading, literacy," said Lisa Brenner, who runs student services for the district. "But all your strategies don't work if the students aren't there."

At School 83, a neighborhood elementary school on the northeast side, staff have been spending a lot more time talking about attendance over the last year and a half.

The school sends students home with flyers about attendance, and when parents come in for conferences with teachers they talk about how important it is for kids to show up. When social worker Kim Winkel hears from parents, she

NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

always checks on their children's attendance and tardiness.

"I see them slowly getting it," Winkel said. "The families and the parents are starting to see and buy into us saying, 'you need to be here. You need to be learning.' "

School 83 is also offering a slew of rewards for kids to come to school: There's a club for students with good attendance, students can earn snacks or the chance to wear jeans and the class with the best attendance each month has a party.



Those are the kind of small programs designed to reach all the kids in a school, said Hedy Chang of Attendance Works, a national nonprofit that researches and promotes school attendance.

School-wide efforts like rewards are often the first step in district strategies to improve attendance, and they are most effective with students who only have minor attendance problems, Chang said. Reaching kids with more severe attendance gaps is a different challenge.

"You have to start some place where you feel you can make a difference. Messaging just doesn't take that much," Chang said. "It's harder to move the kids out of chronic absence."

So far, the district has seen relatively modest impact on students with severe attendance issues. District data show that the number of students who were chronically absent—those who missed 18 or more days of school—fell by 232 students in the first year of the program. Last year, 9.55 percent of students were chronically absent, down from 10.14 percent in 2014-2015.

Absence rates are typically much higher in IPS high schools than elementary schools. At most elementary schools in the district, fewer than 5 percent of students are chronically absent. At some of the district's high schools, however, chronic absence rates are as high as 35 percent, according to state data.

Districtwide, the improvement has been faster among students who are on the cusp, missing 10-18 days of school. During the first year of the effort, the number of students at-risk fell from 16.93 percent to 14.45 percent—808 fewer students fell into that category.

But the district is also in the beginning stages of the program. This year, staff are focusing on reaching kids with more severe attendance issues, Brenner said. That means creating programs that get kids excited about school like adult mentors who eat breakfast with students. And it means offering targeted help based on the problems each student is facing.

"There are lots of great things we could do," Brenner said, "but if they are not meeting the individual needs of the students, they are just not going to be effective."

Staff at School 83 are already spending a lot of time working directly with families when kids struggle to come to school. When kids miss school, they call parents to check in. If that doesn't work, they stop by students' houses. And they try to help families find a plan to get their children to school.



Last year, a first grader was so anxious about coming to school that she would cry every day and complain of stomach aches, said Cathy Pullings, the parent involvement educator.

NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

Eventually, the girl's mother started making excuses to keep her home. So Pullings made a deal with the student — come to school, stay all day and at the end of the week, she would visit Pullings for a special prize.

"Before I knew ... she didn't have to come and get that prize anymore. She was there every single day," Pullings said. "I think it's just a little push to say, 'I'm here for you. What can we do to make it better for you to come to school?'"

All this work seems to be paying off. School 83 has one of the lowest rates of chronic absenteeism in the district. Last year, the school, which enrolled 290 kids, had just 3 students who missed enough school to land on that list.

Staff have always paid attention to average daily attendance at School 83. But the new program was an extra reminder to focus on what was going on with every student, said principal Heather Haskett. They are constantly looking at data to make sure students aren't falling through the cracks.

"Now, we're more direct and more explicit about what we are doing," she said. "We are really looking at every single, individual child and monitoring their attendance."

[This article appeared online at Chalkboard.org on January 26, 2017.]

Legislative News— Follow the Money: With ESAs on the Line, School Choice Groups Spend Big

By Riley Snyder and Megan Messerly

Nevada is shaping up to be a major battleground in the national debate over educational choice after authorizing the broadest school voucher-style program in the country in 2015.

The Nevada Supreme Court recently ruled the Educational Savings Account program was constitutional but struck down the funding mechanism. With Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval announcing his plan to put \$60 million toward the program, there's just one more hurdle to cross —

a Legislature controlled by Democrats, who have been resistant to the idea.

It may be why groups on both sides of the debate, from unions to nonprofit think tanks to philanthropists eager to overhaul public education, have poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into legislative campaign coffers, according to a *Nevada Independent* review of campaign finance records.

Battles over education funding aren't surprising — teachers unions are traditional behemoths in the campaign finance world.

But the funds being spent by education activists supporting school choice are a new wrinkle in the small world of Nevada campaign finance. Listed below are several groups that spent big during the 2016 campaign cycle.



Nevada Federation for Children PAC

An offshoot of the national American Federation for Children, Nevada Federation for Children, is a school choice advocacy group based in Washington D.C. The national group's former chairwoman, Betsy DeVos, is President Donald Trump's pick for Secretary of Education and a major conservative donor in Michigan and throughout the country.

The Nevada Federation for Children spent roughly \$200,000 in Nevada throughout the 2016 campaign cycle, with all of the money coming from out-of-state donors including several members of the ultra-wealthy DeVos clan and numerous businesses based in Michigan. These include:

- \$55,000 from Betsy DeVos and Richard M. DeVos, Jr. The couple are longtime Republican Party donors and major advocates for school choice.
- \$50,000 from McKinley Associates Inc., an Ann Arbor, MI-based real estate company.

NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

Its founder, Ronald N. Weiser, is a longtime supporter and donor of the Republican Party in Michigan.

- \$50,000 from KoJaian Properties Inc., a commercial real estate business based in Bloomfield, MI. The group's founder, C. Michael Kojaian, gave more than \$310,000 to a Super PAC supporting Jeb Bush.
- \$30,000 from William E. Oberndorf, a California-based investor and school choice proponent who succeeded Betsy DeVos as head of the national American Federation for Children.

Donations to Nevada lawmakers include:

- \$7,500 to Republican Sen. Heidi Gansert in two separate contributions on the same day in mid-October
- \$5,000 to Democratic Assemblyman Justin Watkins in October. Watkins appears to be the only legislative Democrat who openly supports ESAs.
- \$5,000 to Republican Assemblyman Jim Marchant in October
- \$5,000 to Republican Assemblyman Richard McArthur in October. (The contribution was listed as coming from "Nevada Foundation for Children," which appears to be a mistake: it's listed at the same P.O. Box as one of the "Nevada Federation for Children" contributions.)
- \$2,500 to the Growth & Opportunity PAC, run by Republican Assembly Leader Paul Anderson, in April.
- \$2,000 to Republican Assembly Leader Paul Anderson in May
- \$2,000 to Republican Assemblyman James Oscarson in June
- \$2,000 to Republican Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury in May
- \$1,500 to Republican Assemblyman Keith Pickard in June
- \$1,500 to Republican Assemblywoman Jill Tolles in June
- \$1,000 to Republican Sen. Scott Hammond in June. Hammond sponsored the original ESA legislation in 2015.

StudentsFirst

StudentsFirst, a Sacramento-based political lobbying organization, was founded in 2010 by Michelle Rhee, the controversial former chancellor of the Washington D.C. public school system. The group advocates a number of education reform

policies including charter schools, voucher programs and ending teacher tenure.



According to a 2013 *Los Angeles Times* profile, the group spent nearly \$2 million on general election candidates in 2012, most of them Republicans. Because it's registered as a nonprofit, the group isn't required to reveal any of its donors, but Rhee has said the group has received funding from numerous educational philanthropies including the Laura and John Arnold Foundation and Eli Broad.

Although his former press secretary left to work for the group, campaign finance records show Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval has not received any contributions from StudentsFirst.

Donations to Nevada lawmakers include:

- \$75,000 to the Republican State Leadership Committee between 2013 and 2014
- \$13,000 to Republican Assembly Leader Paul Anderson between 2012 and 2015
- \$12,000 to Republican Sen. Ben Kieckhefer between 2013 and 2015
- \$10,000 to Assembly Democrats in October 2012
- \$10,000 to Democratic Assemblyman Skip Daly between June and October 2014
- \$10,000 to Democratic Sen. Mo Denis between 2012 and 2014
- \$9,000 to Democratic Assemblyman Elliot Anderson between 2012 and 2014
- \$9,000 to Republican Senate Minority Leader Michael Roberson in 2014
- \$7,500 to Nevada Senate Democrats in October 2012
- \$4,000 to Republican Sen. Becky Harris in October 2015
- \$5,000 to the Republican Assembly Caucus in November 2012
- \$5,000 to Senate Republicans in October 2012
- \$5,000 to Democratic Assemblywoman Lesley Cohen in 2014
- \$4,000 to Republican Sen. Scott Hammond in October 2012

NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

- \$4,000 to Democratic Senate Majority Leader Aaron Ford between 2012 and 2013
- \$4,000 to former Republican state senator and current Lt. Gov. Mark Hutchison in 2012
- \$2,000 to Democratic Sen. Joyce Woodhouse in 2012
- \$2,000 to Democratic Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz in 2013
- \$1,000 to Republican Assemblyman James Oscarson in 2012

LIBRE Initiative

A nonprofit group designed to promote the “principles and values of economic freedom” to the Hispanic community, the LIBRE Initiative has taken an active political role in Nevada. The group is bankrolled by Americans for Prosperity, a libertarian-leaning, free-market political advocacy group funded by billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch.

The LIBRE Initiative hasn’t directly given to any members of the Nevada Legislature, but the group did spend more than six figures on ads attacking Democratic Senate candidate Catherine Cortez Masto during the 2016 campaign.

The group is spearheading a “School Choice Week” rally in Carson City.

Academica Nevada

Academica Nevada is an organization that provides professional services and support to charter schools in Nevada, Hawaii and Colorado.

The group’s website says they currently work for Somerset Academy of Las Vegas, Doral Academy of Nevada, Pinecrest Academy of Nevada, Mater Academy of Nevada and SLAM of Nevada. It’s also one of the official event planners for Wednesday’s school choice rally in Carson City.

State campaign finance records show the group has given about \$22,000 to candidates since 2014, mostly to municipal candidates. It has given \$2,000 to Republican Assembly Leader Paul Anderson and \$2,500 to the Nevada Senate Democrats in 2016.

Other school choice groups

EdChoice, formerly known as the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, is one of the leading education reform organizations supporting

school voucher programs. As a nonprofit, the organization does not have to disclose its donors.

EdChoice reimbursed Republican Sen. Scott Hammond \$525.10 on Jan. 11, 2016 and Republican Sen. Becky Harris \$308.57 in late September for travel-related expenses. (The amount paid to Hammond is listed as a contribution in his campaign report. However, an EdChoice spokeswoman clarified the payment was a reimbursement and that the organization does not make political contributions.)

An Idaho-based school choice program, **Bluum**, also gave Hammond \$200.50 on Jan. 11, 2016, while the Florida-based Foundation for Excellence in Education, founded by former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, gave Hammond another \$515.17 on Dec. 15, 2015. Hammond said Wednesday that both payments were “probably, most likely” reimbursements as well.

Bush also directly donated \$250 to Hammond in December.

[This article appeared online in The Nevada Independent, January 26, 2017. For online access, please use this link:

<https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/follow-money-esas-line-school-choice-groups-spend-big>]

Apple to Join Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook, Google in Artificial Intelligence Research Alliance

By Sri Ravipati

Apple may be the latest company to join the Partnership for AI, a consortium that was established to develop best practices for artificial intelligence (AI), reported Bloomberg News and various other news organizations. The alliance already includes Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook, Google, IBM and Deepmind.

The Partnership for AI was founded late 2016 with the goal of advancing public understanding and awareness of AI and its potential benefits across industries, including education. Joining the consortium provides a structured platform for AI researchers and key

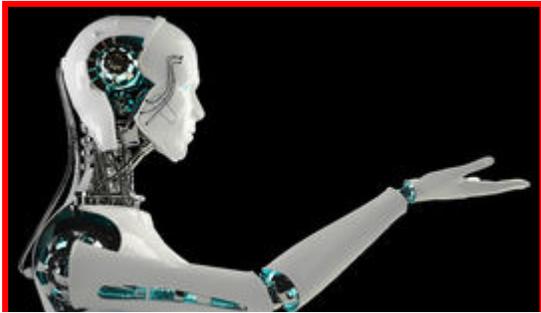
NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

stakeholders to communicate directly and openly, according to the organization's website.

Last October, the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy released a report titled "Preparing for the Future of Artificial Intelligence," which named education as one of the major sectors to be impacted by artificial intelligence research. "An AI-enabled world demands a data-literate citizenry that is able to read,

use, interpret and communicate about data, and participate in policy debates about matters affected by AI," according to the White House report. "AI knowledge and education are increasingly emphasized in federal [STEM] education programs. AI education is also a component of Computer Science for All, [former President Barack Obama's] initiative to empower all American students from kindergarten through high school to learn computer science and be equipped with the computational thinking skills they need in a technology-driven world."



Apple had a relatively early start in AI with the introduction of its virtual assistant Siri in 2011. Bloomberg News noted, however, that Apple lost its edge in AI when other tech giants like Amazon and Microsoft released their own versions – Alexa and Cortana.

Additionally, IBM's Watson and Facebook's FAIR have been sharing massive data sets to develop their own AI platforms, which may have motivated the notoriously private Apple to join the AI conversation.

[This article first appeared online in The Journal: Transforming Education through Technology, January 26, 2017. To access the article please use this link: <https://thejournal.com/articles/2017/01/26/apple-to-join-microsoft-amazon-facebook-google-in-artificial-intelligence-research-alliance.aspx>]



Special Thanks to these NASB Corporate Friends—



SHERMAN & HOWARD

NASB News Update--February 2017

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

Welcome to NASB's Newest Corporate Sponsor—Teachers of Tomorrow



Teachers of Tomorrow is the largest educator preparation program in the country. We recruit career changers with an average age of 32, screen them and prepare them through classroom readiness training to solve critical teacher shortages. In the fall of 2016 we were approved by the Nevada Department of Education as an Alternative Route to Licensure. Since that time we have started aggressively recruiting to help school districts ensure that every classroom has a great teacher.

We work with districts to match the candidates with open positions and then support these new teachers with mentoring and further training in the first year.

Last year we placed over 7,000 teachers in schools. We also create a more diverse teacher workforce since our enrollment is 46% non-white. We have been operating since 2004 as Texas Teachers and our program in Nevada is **Nevada Teachers of Tomorrow**.

Our Nevada based staff, led by Lisa Ramirez, is ready to meet with your school leaders to refer our candidates to school districts with open positions. We will send lists of qualified candidates who have completed their initial training and are eligible for their Conditional License to district human resource teams and principals. **There is no cost to the district or school** – the candidate only pays a small fee of \$295 up front and then the remainder of the tuition is only paid when they secure a teaching position.

We were just approved this fall and a school principal in Las Vegas saw our program and asked one of his long-term substitutes, who is amazing with her students, to apply. She worked diligently over the holidays and this past week moved from being a long term sub to being the teacher of record with a conditional license. By this time next year, she will be a fully certified teacher.

Teaching talent is unique. Let us help you make sure you get the talent that best fits your schools.

Plan Ahead for NASB's 2017 Conference

November 17-18—Reno, Atlantis Casino Resort Spa



**Governance Meetings
November 16, 2017**