



The Nevada Policy Research Institute

For Immediate Release
July 8, 2014

Contact Chantal Lovell
702- 222-0642

New NPRI Report: 33 ways to improve Nevada education without spending more

LAS VEGAS — There are dozens of ways to increase student achievement in Nevada without enacting job-killing tax increases or even spending one dollar more, finds a new study from the Nevada Policy Research Institute.

The report, entitled “33 ways to improve education without spending more,” details how school choice and other innovative educational options can lead to better outcomes in the classrooms by more effectively using the money Nevada already spends on education.

Authored by NPRI deputy policy director Geoffrey Lawrence, the study digs into why, despite decades of increased education spending, Nevada’s educational results have failed to improve and what to do about it.

“Better education in Nevada is one of the top priorities for most parents, taxpayers and lawmakers,” said Lawrence. “Unfortunately, a disconnect exists between increasing education spending and increasing education performance — and not just in Nevada, but nationwide.

“In response to this disconnect, an education reform movement has arisen and produced dozens of ways to cost-effectively increase student achievement. Our study reviews the literature and the evidence concerning alternative education policy and offers specific suggestions that will improve education for young Nevadans — and do so with existing tax dollars.”

The study is especially timely, because the Nevada State Education Association is yet again pushing for a large tax increase — this one called “the margin tax” — to funnel even more taxpayer dollars into the state’s current, dysfunctional, education system.

“Although state taxpayers have spent ever-increasing billions of dollars on that system over the last several decades,” said Lawrence, “the educational achievement of Nevada’s students has actually decreased.

“While the need to improve Nevada’s educational system is obvious to all, spending more money on a broken and rigid system is obviously a waste.

“That’s why this study offers specific and proven suggestions to increase student achievement,” he said.” These reforms — from rewarding the best teachers and removing the worst teachers to enacting school choice to ending social promotion — are ideas that are working in other states.”

Before laying out the ways that Nevada can increase student performance without spending more, Lawrence explores the history of public education, student performance in the Silver State and the evolution of the education-reform movement.

The ideas of that movement — examined in detail in the analysis — fall generally into four categories:

- Strategies for improving educator effectiveness
- Strategies for improving the available talent pool of educators
- Strategies for exposing public schools to market forces
- Strategies for better utilizing technological resources to improve student outcomes

Research has shown that the talent level of a child’s teacher is more important to a student’s academic development than any other school-controlled factor, demonstrating the need for policies that put effective educators into the classroom and remove the non-effective. Alternative routes to licensure, longitudinal data tracking and generous merit pay programs for the top performing teachers are among the reforms that other states are using to improve teacher quality.

“The education reform movement has been met with great resistance by government bureaucrats, union officials and other entrenched interests because the movement directly challenges some of the traditional practices in public education,” Lawrence said. “These groups have responded to this challenge by launching an intellectual counter-reformation that would only broaden and expand the current, dysfunctional system.”

Lawrence also lays out the case for school choice, explaining:

The lack of competition in Nevada’s education system is a fundamental problem. Public schools are entitled to taxpayer support regardless of how effectively, or ineffectively, they educate students. This lack of accountability allows administrators to use public education resources inefficiently. Empowering parents to pick the school that best meets the needs of their child will force school administrators to allocate resources in the most cost-effective manner because waste cannot be tolerated if parents can simply take their business elsewhere.

Lawrence noted that at \$9,650 dollars per student, Nevada taxpayers contribute more to the state’s public education system than their counterparts in a majority of neighboring states, yet Nevada students perform lower on standardized tests.

The political Left in Nevada, he said, is either unfamiliar with or intentionally ignores the decades of academic research into what makes schools successful and sophomorically asks fiscal conservatives, “Where’s your plan is to fix education?”

“Well,” said Lawrence, “here it is — in one document.”

For decades, he said, the state has continued to try the prescriptions of teacher unions and other entrenched interests and the result has been tens of thousands of academically damaged students.

“For the sake of Nevada’s kids, Nevada’s lawmakers should redeploy the state’s already-ample existing revenues and implement these proven school reforms right away,” said Lawrence.

The full report, “[33 ways to improve education without spending more](http://www.npri.org/docLib/20140708_NPRIStudy-33waystoimproveeducation.pdf),” is available at:
http://www.npri.org/docLib/20140708_NPRIStudy-33waystoimproveeducation.pdf

###

Nevada Policy Research Institute • 7130 Placid St., Las Vegas, NV 89119
Phone: 702-222-0642 • Fax: 702-227-0927 • Web site: <http://npri.org>