

From an economic development perspective, our failure to adequately fund our education system, especially PreK-12, is the greatest threat to our state's economic future. The rhetoric that claims we have plenty of funding if we just use it properly - is a farce. While we can make up "facts" to support any position nowadays, the reality is that our schools are underfunded, and our teachers are underpaid. Until our state decides to make funding for education ***the top priority*** in the state budget (not just political talking points), we will continue to threaten the future of our economy and the very survival of the nearly 500,000 kids in public education across the state.

**The inadequate funding of our education system is terrible and getting worse.** Nevada ranks 49th in Finance per Quality Counts, 49th in Kids Chance for Success, and consistently receives an F in the Nation's Report Card in funding levels, distribution, and effort. According to *Educate Nevada Now*, "Nevada's most recent legislative study on school funding reported that the state only funds 58% of the resources necessary for students to succeed and close to \$2 billion in taxes were raised for education, only to be diverted to other parts of the state budget and thus never increased school revenue. (IP1 and Marijuana tax)." Nevada has one of the largest student-to-teacher ratios in the country and the third worst per/pupil teacher salaries. (National Education Alliance). Finally, Nevada also ranks among the bottom 50 states when comparing per-pupil funding for education. Most parents would agree that their children deserve better and that the state's per-pupil funding for education should not be at the bottom of any list.

**Lack of Funding Hits Teachers Hardest.** The Nevada State Education Association estimates roughly 3,000 teaching jobs remain vacant across the state's 17 school districts. Why would someone want to be a teacher when the average starting salary for the college Class of 2020 was \$55,260? (National Association of Colleges and Employers) In Nevada, that starting salary is closer to \$41,000 a year, 25% less. According to EducationWeek, teachers work, on average, over 54 hours a week. If you think that is fine for a nine-month school year, most teachers devote a good portion of their "break" to preparing for the upcoming school year. That includes two to four weeks for continuing education, three weeks for curriculum planning, and another four weeks for training, classroom setup, and preparation. The slow increase in classroom sizes over the years can be even worse for the teachers than their low pay. Nevada has one of the largest classroom sizes in the Nation, second only to Utah.

**Additional funding is the only solution.** You can only move the deck chairs around on the Titanic for so long. We need to either change course or crash our economy and our kids. The 11-member Nevada Commission on School Funding released its report more than a year ago. The Commission recommended: "A steady progression toward per-pupil spending between the national average and the 2018 APA recommendations adjusted for inflation." Current per-pupil funding is \$9,249; the 2020 National Average per-pupil funding is 35% more at \$12,645. This funding gap equates to more than \$2 billion. According to the Commission, "Bringing K-12 education funding in Nevada to an optimal level will require a significant and ongoing commitment – both in terms of political will and the investment of resources."

**Time for a real vision for our state.** I don't know a single parent that believes funding for our children's education should be below the national average. So, let's set a goal as a state to increase per-pupil funding for our kids and our teachers to the national average by 2030. There are many ways to do this, but there is no way to do it within the current budget, no matter how much political rhetoric and sleight of hand are used. The Commission provided several excellent recommendations, but these will not be acted upon until we, the voters, make it clear that this is **our top priority**. As Reverend Paul Hansen, a leader with *Nevadans for the Common Good*, said, "It is disheartening to know that our students have the largest class sizes in the country, don't have the resources they need to succeed, and are having to start their adult lives academically behind the rest of the nation," This election is our first

opportunity to move the Titanic a bit, as the iceberg (the crash of our economy and our kids financial future) looms large.

**If you want to be a part of the solution, consider signing the pledge!** Educate Nevada Now – “We must push lawmakers to move towards a fair per-pupil funding goal. Moving Nevada K-12 education up from its recurring last-place ranking should not feel unattainable. Signing the pledge lets lawmakers know we demand highly-efficient schools now.” [Take Action | ENF \(empowernevadasfuture.org\)](https://empowernevadasfuture.org)

[Here's How Many Hours a Week Teachers Work \(edweek.org\)](https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/heres-how-many-hours-a-week-teachers-work/2019/05)

[Average Class Size By State \(Including Elementary and High School Breakdown\) – Zippia](https://www.zippia.com/average-class-size-by-state-including-elementary-and-high-school-breakdown/)

[Preliminary Recommendations Regarding Optimal Funding \(nv.gov\)](https://nv.gov/sites/nv.gov/files/2019-07/2019-07-15%20Preliminary%20Recommendations%20Regarding%20Optimal%20Funding%20-%20Final%20Version.pdf)