

March 20, 2020

Superintendent Jhone Ebert
Nevada Department of Education
2080 E. Flamingo Road; Suite 210
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Dear Superintendent Ebert:

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 100 years. We appreciate the work that you and your team have been doing in recent weeks in response to COVID-19. NSEA looks forward to continuing our work together through this crisis to ensure the health and well-being of every Nevada student and educator.

This letter is to follow up on an email we sent to you on Monday, March 16th related to the impact of Nevada school closures on state testing. Nevada schools have been ordered closed from March 16th through April 6th. Since ordering Nevada's schools closed for 3 weeks, Governor Sisolak announced a Risk Mitigation Initiative that included 30-day closures of other businesses and services in Nevada. The practical impact of this will mean Nevada school closures are likely to be extended to at least until April 16th. We have also received information that the federal government is waiving standardized testing for the current school year, but ambiguity remains. Clarification from the Nevada Department of Education is called for in this situation.

You addressed the issue of the impact of school closures on statutorily required assessments in a March 13th Frequently Asked Questions for Districts & Schools document:

Districts and schools administer statewide assessments during a broad window that began on February 20 and closes on May 20. If there is a disruption due to COVID-19 that prevents a district/school from administering assessments before the window closes, NDE will work with districts on a case-by-case basis to adjust the window accordingly... NDE may provide guidance to districts/schools so that all eligible students can complete statutorily required assessments. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) issued a fact sheet indicating that the Secretary of Education has the authority to issue targeted one-year waivers of certain accountability requirements for schools impacted by extraordinary circumstances.

Given at least one-third of the February 20 to May 20 testing window will be exhausted by novel coronavirus related school closures, NSEA feels that it will be irresponsible to attempt to force the testing into the few remaining weeks. Not only would testing in a limited window present significant logistical problems for most schools, it also would send the absolute wrong message to our students, families, and educators already experiencing significant disruption and turmoil.

As our members turn their attention to the extraordinary task of educating our children away from school, we call on you to cancel statewide assessments for all Nevada students. This includes the Smarter Balanced Assessment for Grades 3-8, Science Assessments for Grades 5, 8, and 11, the spring

Measures of Academic Progress assessments for Grades K-3, and End of Course Examinations for Grades 7-12.

On behalf of educators across the state of Nevada, I would like to thank you again for all you are doing to get us through this time of crisis. We stand ready to assist in any way we can for the wellbeing of Nevada educators, students, families, and communities.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Rippet". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Brian Rippet
President, Nevada State Education Association