



**"80% OF THE TEST WILL BE BASED ON THE LECTURE YOU MISSED AND ONE BOOK YOU DIDN'T READ!"**

**WHAT STUDENTS NATIONWIDE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY (HSE) EXAMS...?**

**STUDENTS SAY IT'S VERY, VERY HARD.**

**THEY SAY THAT NONE OF THE MATH WAS TAUGHT IN CLASS.**

**THEY ARE SHOCKED AT THE DIFFICULTY AND UNFAMILIARITY OF THE MATH QUESTIONS.**

**THEY REPORT IT'S TOUGH TO BE PERSISTENT THROUGH THE WHOLE TEST.**

**IN PARTICULAR, THE LONGER THEY WAIT FOR RESULTS, THE MORE STUDENTS DWELL ON THE TEST DIFFICULTY, AND THE MORE THEY LOSE HEART ABOUT THEIR EDUCATIONAL PATH.**



## PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

In January 2014, the High School Equivalency (HSE) exams aligned with the State's Common Core Standards. The exams are now lengthier, computerized, content area specific, and much more difficult. However, this is nothing new to Adult Education as Nevada's Education Programs Supervisor/ State High School Equivalency Administrator Brad Deeds noted, *"Every year after the introduction of a new, revamped GED® test, the numbers nationally have dipped. The same thing happened in 2002 when a new GED was launched. This is a natural consequence of the rush amongst test-takers to finish up on the older version of the assessment, before a new, more rigorous assessment is introduced."*

In addition, Christine Boyd, Administrator for the Office of Adult Education and Vocational Services from the Illinois Department of Corrections shared similar thoughts, *"Many people are comparing pass rates from the new test to last year and those are unfair comparisons. However, it does seem to be the comparisons that people are using. A more appropriate comparison is the switch from the 1988 version to the 2002 version. The same patterns were seen. There was a huge rush to get everyone tested prior to the switch. So the numbers are escalated for 2013 and minimal students tested in the early part of the year."*

Adult Correctional Educators throughout the State of Nevada are tackling the increased rigor head-on and are taking a proactive approach in adjusting to the changes. The first annual Nevada Correctional Education Consortium (NCEC) Summit was held in Las Vegas on March 13, 2015. Over fifty correctional educators and administrators from the eight correctional school districts throughout the state of Nevada convened to discuss the current HSE challenges, common core standards and the newly adopted career and readiness standards.

The summit was hosted by Clark County School District. The NCEC conference committee invited Ms. Claudia Bianca, NV ABE Professional Development Manager

to lead and facilitate the day's activities. She in turn asked NV ABE Professional Development Trainer, Ms. Joy Zimmerman to co-present. Attendees were very fortunate to have such expertise and highly regarded professionals volunteer their time. Ms. Bianca has graciously offered her time again to sit in and observe correctional classrooms throughout the state, thereby providing her a better understanding of the unique challenges facing correctional educators i.e., no internet access. She has also agreed to come back and facilitate NCEC's next conference. On behalf of NCEC thank you Ms. Bianca for your commitment and time put forth in providing Nevada's Adult Educators the tools necessary for student success.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, NV ABE Professional Development Trainer, Ms. JOY ZIMMERMAN, CCSD DIRECTOR DR. ROBERT HENRY AND MS. CLAUDIA BIANCA, NV ABE Professional Development Manager



MORE PICTURES FROM THE  
NCEC'S SUMMIT HELD ON  
MARCH 13, 2015.



## But, why the increased challenges for Nevada Adult Learners?

### Let's start from the beginning....

-  In the late 1990s, the "Standards & Accountability Movement" began in the U.S. as states began writing standards outlining (a) what students were expected to know and to be able to do at each grade level, and (b) implementing assessment designed to measure whether students were meeting the standards.
-  In 2004, Nevada began discussing the need for common standards.
-  In 2009, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices united behind the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and then Governor Gibbons joined this effort.
-  On June 18, 2010, the Nevada State Board of Education moved to adopt the Common Core Standards (the Nevada Common Core Standards).

**Why did Nevada adopt the Nevada Common Core Standards?** (See full article: [www.nevada.edu/ir/Documents/CCSS\\_Initiatives/Nevada\\_CCSS\\_FAQs](http://www.nevada.edu/ir/Documents/CCSS_Initiatives/Nevada_CCSS_FAQs))

Nevada adopted the Nevada Common Core Standards in order to raise the learning expectations and align instruction accordingly to ensure that students are ready for college-level content and careers. The standards are critical to Nevada's goal to increase the high school graduation rate as well as the number of students completing certificates or degrees at Nevada higher education institutions.

### What are the Common Core State Standards?

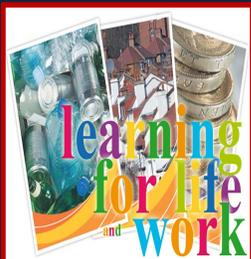
The Common Core State Standards are a set of academic standards, or learning goals, for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics that states voluntarily adopt. The standards outline what students should master in each grade and shape curriculum development at each grade level. The standards establish a clear roadmap of academic expectations, so that students, parents, and teachers can work together toward shared goals. The standards are clear, concise, and relevant to the real world, focusing on the knowledge and skills students will need to succeed in life after high school, in both postsecondary education and a globally competitive workforce.

### How do the Nevada Common Core Standards differ from the previous state standards?

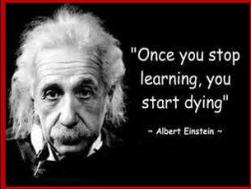
The new standards will mean changes in math and English language arts curriculum as well as changes in how these subjects are taught. In mathematics, teachers will be expected to focus on three or four big ideas in math for each grade level, rather than attempting a wide range of topics in one school year. Emphasis will be put on deeper understanding of content, and topics will be worked on over a series of concepts logically connected from one grade to the next and linked to other major topics in the grade.

In English language arts, teachers in all content areas will share responsibility for literacy development. There will be some shifts in the types of texts students will be expected to master. Students will be expected to be able to read literary and informational text closely, and with deep understanding. Text will include more non-fiction, or informational text. Students will be required to engage in short and extended research projects during the school year to analyze, synthesize, and reflect on complex texts.

-  In September 2010, using Race to the Top Assessment funds, the U.S. Department of Education awarded significant grants to two consortia of states to develop K-12 assessments to measure student progress toward the *Common Core Standards*.



"THE MORE I LIVE, THE MORE I LEARN. THE MORE I LEARN, THE MORE I REALIZE, THE LESS I KNOW."  
 — MICHEL LEGRAND



In 2011, Carl Krueger from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) wrote the following issue of Policy Insights\*:

**Teacher preparation and in-service professional development-** Teachers will be expected to prepare students to demonstrate through assessments that they are able to meet the new state standards. Not only will schools of education need to prepare pre-service teachers differently, but states will need to provide effective professional development so that current teachers can do the job that will be expected of them. Since there is no funding for professional development provided through this or any related initiative, it will be up to states, school districts, and schools to ensure that the teachers are equipped to succeed.

There is the challenge of adjusting teacher education programs to prepare pre-service teachers to teach to the new standards, while at the same time revising in-service professional development programs to retrain veteran teachers who have already spent time in the field. Further, the CCSS requires a greater and deeper content knowledge than many of the state standards currently in place. Over time, teacher education programs will be able to adjust their curriculum to deal with this; providing meaningful professional development in the content areas in the interim, however, will likely be much more difficult to address. Layered on top of these two challenges, each of which will require distinct strategies, is the dilemma that for some period of time, teachers will be expected to know, understand, and be able to teach to both the state standards that have been in place and the new CCSS.

**Implications for Higher Education in the West-** As noted, likely changes resulting from the adoption and implementation of the CCSS are in areas related to alignment; current structures of standards and assessments; curriculum development and theory; teacher preparation; and collaboration among K-12 and higher education. There are unique challenges and implications for higher education in the West.

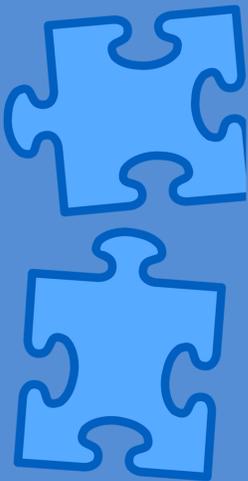
**Wide open spaces-** Many of the Western states are characterized by expansive geographical areas and small populations. In states like Alaska, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, one can drive hundreds of miles between towns and cities and see more wildlife than humans as they make the trek. This defining characteristic will undoubtedly create challenges in some rural districts in implementing the CCSS, particularly with respect to teacher preparation and professional development. Many rural areas in the West already find it difficult to hire teachers with the necessary experience and credentials to teach a challenging curriculum.

Kruger concludes, "While the challenges ahead are real and important, they should not be used as an excuse to delay implementation. Instead, states need to work together across the higher education and K-12 sectors and across state lines. This is an opportunity for both K-12 and higher education to come together at the ground level to align in ways they never have before."

*\*Read entire article: This issue was prepared by Carl Krueger, project coordinator, Policy Analysis and Research (303.541.0263 or ckrueger@wiche.edu), and Demarée K. Michelau, director of policy analysis, Policy Analysis and Research (303.541.0223 or dmichelau@wiche.edu), WICHE.*

In 2012, NCEC was established. NCEC promotes secondary correctional education excellence and innovation, incorporating evidence-based practices to improve educational outcomes, support successful re-entry, lower recidivism and save taxpayer dollars. Membership included: Department of Education, Department of Corrections, Carson City School District, Clark County School District, Pershing County School District and White Pine County School District.





- In April, 2013, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) released the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), an Adult Education vision of the K-12 Common Core State Standards already in application throughout the United States. Thereby, providing *all* adult learners the opportunity to be prepared for post-secondary training without the need for remediation. All Nevada Department of Education's Adult Education Family and Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded programs which include correctional education formally adopted the CCRS.

**What are the College and Career Readiness Standards?**

The standards are separated into four *strands*: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. Each strand is headed by a strand-specific set of *College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards* identical across all levels of learning. Each *level-specific standard* corresponds to the same-numbered CCR and or standard. In other words, each anchor standard identifying broad college and career readiness skills has a corresponding level-specific standard illustrating specific level-appropriate expectations. The CCR anchor standards should provide focus and coherence.

- On January 2, 2014, Nevada was the first state in the nation to begin using the HiSET® Test from Educational Testing Service and the TASC™ Test from CTB/McGraw-Hill in addition to the GED® Test as approved assessments for high school equivalency.
- In 2014, NCEC expanded its membership to include: Elko County School District, Humboldt County School District, Lincoln County School District and Nye County School District, resulting in the following benefits: improving the capacity and expertise of Nevada's correctional educators by providing professional development programs for all staff, encouraging the sharing of resources among partners, creating opportunities for grant writing and increasing effectiveness of advocacy for policy change.
- On April 1, 2015, Nevada Assemblyman Brent Jones, R-Las Vegas, presented AB303, a measure in committee that would repeal Common Core K-12 education standards during a hearing at the Legislative Building in Carson City. Jones says 11 states have already opted out of Common Core, with others looking at legislation, similar to what Nevada is looking at. "Currently, Common Core has not been proven to be effective," Jones said. "It's kind of like an experiment on all our children and that's why so many states are opting out."
- The state Board of Education voted unanimously to oppose AB303, recommending to stay the course with Common Core.



While the legislative discussion continues, Adult Correctional Educators throughout the State of Nevada are exploring commonalities and sharing resources to achieve one common goal: **to maximize educational opportunities for every incarcerated individual throughout the state of Nevada.**

By forming better lines of communication, sharing and implementing best practices, specifically those strategies that are evidenced based NCEC will soon become the Nation's leader in Correctional Education.

The NCEC meets the third Wednesday of each month from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. The meeting is video conferenced throughout the state.

The next NCEC summit is scheduled for January 2016.



HOW COULD WE POSSIBLY GO WRONG WITH THIS DEDICATED TEAM OF NEVADA'S CORRECTIONAL EDUCATORS?

**THANKS TO ALL, TOGETHER WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE.**

**NDOC  
IS A**



**ZONE**