Business, community and education perceptions regarding education needs in Nevada

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BUSINESS, COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION PERCEPTIONS REGARDING EDUCATION NEEDS IN NEVADA

by

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ABSTRACT

Business, Community and Education Perceptions Regarding Education Needs in Nevada

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The study ascertained the perceptions of business, community and education representatives on the education needs in Nevada. The research followed up a Statewide Needs Assessment Process conducted in 2004 involving 60 people with interviews conducted with selected representatives in 2007. The Nevada needs assessment was the first recorded example of a formal process designed to determine stakeholder perceptions about education. The research conducted in 2007 provided an update on what was learned from the Statewide Needs Assessment Process in 2004. The major themes that surfaced in the 2004 needs assessment were: 1) Ready to Learn, 3) Successful Transitions, 3) Equity and Access and 4) Exceptional People. These four major categories generated a new list of questions which were asked in the 2007 interviews to gain updated information on the perceptions of business, community and education representatives about the education needs in Nevada.

A case study descriptive methodology was used to conduct the study and included the interview responses of the business, community and education representatives in both
2004 and 2007. The research provided evidence and rationale which pertained to the contemporary needs of the education system in Nevada.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study, conducted in 2007, further ascertained the perceptions of business, community and education representatives relative to the education needs in Nevada. The 2007 research followed up a Statewide Needs Assessment Process conducted in 2004 by the Nevada Public Education Foundation (NPEF), a statewide, nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization. In 2004, the Foundation commissioned a study involving 60 people who were interviewed by J.D. Hoye, a consultant. The needs assessment was the first recorded example of a formal process designed to determine stakeholder perceptions about education. Information gained from the 2004 study was used to determine priorities for funding initiatives supported by the Foundation. The research conducted in 2007 was a follow-up of the 2004 interviews. A select group of the 2004 participants were chosen to contribute. The results from the research in 2007 expanded on what was gleaned from the Statewide Needs Assessment Process in 2004.

The history of education in Nevada dates back to 1861. Nevada was a "frontier state" and its education system was founded in the one room school house. The one room school house evolved into over 200 school districts at one time. In 1955 the legislature passed a consolidation measure, the Peabody Plan, which resulted in 17 school districts coterminous with the 17 counties in the state. The education challenges in Nevada were numerous and included unprecedented growth in the number of students and schools,
particularly in the Las Vegas area. In 1989, a state accountability system was created to measure the effectiveness of schools. Among the items measured were the high student drop out rate; the low high school graduation rate; the low college going rate; the low student achievement rate; the low rating in per pupil expenditures; and the need for more teachers, particularly in science, math and special education. Numerous assessments of data and other indicators were developed by the school districts and the state legislature over the past 18 years, especially after the enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal act in 2001. Prior to the study in 2004, there was no recorded history of a formal needs assessment process based on interviewing representative stakeholders about the Nevada education system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this 2007 study was to follow-up research conducted in 2004 to further ascertain the perceptions of business, community and education representatives relative to the needs of the education system in Nevada. Initially, the NPEF commissioned a study on the education needs in 2004, to update the foundation strategic plan, and to design a strategy for securing resources and making investments that would enhance the educational system in Nevada. The 2007 study was pursued to follow-up the prior research.

The Nevada Public Education Foundation was authorized in 1987, under Nevada Revised Statues 385.091, as a nonprofit corporation for education enhancement and recognition. The formal organization and board was established in 1991 for public educational and charitable purposes in Nevada. The Board set forth bylaws and articles
of incorporation which were approved by the State Board of Education and the Secretary of State. The Foundation was reorganized in 2000 with a new Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees members possessed the leadership, financial, and organizational skills necessary to create a successful non-profit organization. The Foundation Board conducted the needs assessment study to establish a transparent set of needs in order to raise funds and make strategic investments in the Nevada education system which were not being already provided through public funding. NPEF desired that funds be used to support innovative and exemplary programs.

The 2004 needs assessment involved 60 people representing stakeholders from business, education, key associations, parents and elected officials. Individuals were selected for the interviews from three major groups: the business establishment, education supporters and fringe groups. The interviews were conducted by J.D. Hoye, a principal of the firm Keep the Change, Inc., through a grant provided to the Nevada Community Foundation. Four questions were asked during the personal interviews:

1) What do you believe is the most pressing need in the educational system in Nevada?

2) What outcomes/results do you believe best measure educational success?

3) What role should employers play in providing educational opportunities for students?

4) How would you describe the political landscape in relation to support for education in Nevada (you may want to discuss the pushbacks or lack of support for education)?

Four major themes emerged from the interview process in 2004:
1) Ready to Learn - Learners maximize the benefits of the public education system by achieving proper foundation skills.

2) Successful Transitions - Preparation for college and careers should have equal standing in the educational system.

3) Equity and Access - All students deserve equitable access to a quality education.

4) Exceptional People - An education system attracts, trains and honors exceptional people.

These major themes were incorporated into a dynamic strategic plan for the Nevada Public Education Foundation. As a result of the strategic plan, a collaborative project named “Ready for Life” was formed in the greater community of Las Vegas, Nevada to fulfill three of the specific needs raised in the Statewide Needs Assessment Process: “Ready to Learn”, “Successful Transitions” and “Equity and Access”. The convening of over 50 partners in Las Vegas resulted in an advocacy network for underserved youth, whose purpose was to engage students to become productive, contributing members of society and to encourage them to graduate from high school. The process in Las Vegas was modeled after a national community collaborative effort to develop systemic approaches, to reenroll students in the education system and to support struggling students. The Youth Transition Funders Group provided support in five major urban areas through donations from the Carnegie Corporation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, the Meyers Foundation, the Mott Foundation and the William Penn Foundation. The group formulated systemic
approaches to reengage youth who have disengaged from the education system in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Portland and San Jose.

Questions from the four major categories were posed to a diverse group of Nevada stakeholders who participated in the Statewide Needs Assessment Process. The interviewees represented a broad spectrum of the community and included major stakeholders in the educational system as well as in the future of Nevada. The gender was divided among 29 males, representing 48 percent, and 31 females, representing 52 percent. The cultural and ethnic diversity of the group varied from 42 or 71 percent Caucasian, 11 or 20 percent Hispanic, four or eight percent African American, one or two percent Native American. The group’s backgrounds were quite diverse and included 12 or 20 percent parents, 12 or 20 percent key association leaders, 11 or 18 percent employers, six or 10 percent postsecondary education staff and leaders, five or eight percent elected officials, four or six percent superintendents, three or five percent teachers, three or five percent students, two or three percent school district officials and two or three percent principals.

The geographic distribution was diverse as well. Thirty-eight or 63 percent of the interviewees were from northern and rural Nevada, while 22 or 37 percent were from southern Nevada. The county participation indicated that 27 or 45 percent were from Washoe County, 22 or 37 percent were from Clark County, five or eight percent were from Carson City, four or six percent were from Elko County, one or two percent were from Lyon County and one or two percent were from Douglas County.

The first major theme, “Ready to Learn”, was recognized as a critical need area for three reasons: 1) early childhood competencies are required to transition students to
primary school; 2) parents and the community should prepare and encourage children so
they are ready for school; and 3) students must be ready to learn at each stage of the
educational process.

The 2004 interviewees concluded that all students must be “Ready to Learn”, that is,
all students should have whole language and language acquisition skills when they enter
school. There was consensus that parental involvement ought to be part of any strategy
to improve student achievement. An interviewee stated that, “Building strong, positive
relationships between schools and the community must happen before sharing the
responsibility for children can be possible.”

“Successful Transitions” surfaced as a major category because business people,
community members and higher education staff recognized that students should be
motivated, empowered and informed about career/college opportunities for the next stage
of educational development. The participants also recognized that alignment issues were
important, including the fact that the high school diploma needs to be a passport to
college entrance and/or entry level work. Their statements indicated awareness that
although students learn in multiple ways, they should nevertheless meet the competency
requirements at each step in the education system, understand how to meet the
expectations of the system, prepare to make informed choices and plan and achieve their
career/college goals. They agreed that the Nevada educational system should support a
variety of learning environments which allow students to achieve competencies, to
transition students to the next level, to give students information to make informed
choices and plan for their future success.
The 2004 respondents indicated that preparation for college and careers should have equal standing in the educational system. They felt that, “Work opportunities for young people are important, but employers must encourage education at the same time.” Another interviewee said, “Parents need to believe and understand that a high school diploma is a transition tool and should meet college entrance requirements.” It was also stated, “Addressing the drop-out problem is critical, and beginning the focus in high school is too late.” The interviewees felt that the legislature should, “Finance schools to prepare students with competencies and proficiencies. Move away from traditional class time, but expect students to meet proficiency skills in all subject areas to advance to the next level.”

The information gleaned from the “Equity and Access” category provided additional insight into the concerns and priorities of the people who were interviewed. The interviewees valued an atmosphere which promoted cultural understanding by educators and encouraged cultural diversity issues in the educational environment. For example, the respondents agreed that many parents may need English classes to facilitate their children’s school readiness and understanding of subject matter as their student(s) progressed through school. The respondents indicated that schools and classrooms should provide multiple instructional and learning strategies. Some of those interviewed stressed that students who mastered competencies, gained skills and experienced personalized learning added to their sense of belonging to the greater community. The participants supported strong accountability measures and stated that an honest appraisal of student performance, disaggregating data by race and socio-economic factors, was important.
In 2004 a participant commented, “Honestly reviewing student performance data by race and socioeconomic factors is important.” Another interviewee said, “Every student beginning in the sixth grade should have an individual educational plan.”

“Exceptional People” was the fourth major issue raised by those interviewed. They pointed out that Nevada needed to have an excellent education system. To achieve that goal the school districts needed to attract, train, recognize and honor exceptional people. Those interviewed stated they would like to see adequate training for teachers as a state priority. A participant in the 2004 process said, “Assuring that teachers are adequately trained must be a priority.” They also affirmed that Nevada needed to build the capacity of the teaching staff and use more than just the school as a learning environment.

The 2004 interview responses and quotes reflected ideas or elements that were needed to improve the education system. The four major themes that resulted from the needs assessment interview endeavor raised additional questions that led to the follow-up study in 2007. The interviews required more study because the issues that were raised in 2004 were priorities across the educational system in Nevada. Gathering information from key stakeholders in the education system was deemed worthy of further investigation, because Nevada needed to be inclusive of the constituency it served.

Including the public in the interview process and recognizing the efficacy of opinions expressed by the business, community and education opinions provided an important feedback mechanism for the state education foundation. The opportunity to follow up the needs assessment of 2004 and gain more information from influential and mainstream Nevadans provided the motivation and rationale for the study in 2007.
Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1) What were the perceptions of leaders across education, business, community and political arenas regarding the educational needs of children and students in the State of Nevada?

2) How have the perceptions of education, business, community and political leaders changed from the 2004 study and the 2007 study?

The method utilized for the needs assessment in 2004 and the follow-up study in 2007 was the exploratory descriptive case study approach. The 2004 case study was a preliminary research strategy which was expanded and enhanced in the 2007 study with additional questions. The components of the study were the expanded study questions, various related themes, specific categories for analysis, logical linking of data to the themes and the interpretation of the findings. The 2007 research was, therefore, an expanded study of the contemporary perspectives of major Nevada stakeholders about their education system. The stakeholders provided multiple opinions on the needs, measurements, role of employers and political support required for education in Nevada.

The population growth and the changing demographics of the state contributed to the need for examining the opinions of important stakeholders in the education process. In 2004, the Nevada public education system had 385,414 students enrolled according to the Nevada Department of Education (2007). By 2007, there were 426,436 students registered. Nevada had consistently been the leading state in student enrollment growth for a number of years. The 2006 pupil enrollment growth was 3.1 percent. According to Nevada Kids Count (2007) the growth rate was expected to continue at the rate of about
three percent per year. By 2010, Nevada public school enrollment may exceed 465,000 students. The diversity of the student population was changing along with the dramatic growth. In 2007, the student population was 44.5 percent white, 35.2 percent Hispanic, 11 percent black, 7.6 percent Asian and 1.6 percent American Indian. There were 48,230 or 12 percent Special Education students in 2007. The demographics were expected to continue in the trend set over the past decade, which was a decline in the percentage of white students and an increase in the percentage of students of color, particularly those of Hispanic origin.

The 2004 study involved 60 Nevada representatives engaged in business, community and education. Interviews were conducted with selected business people, community members and educators that were considered high profile representatives of their stakeholder group. Those interviewed represented employers from industries such as finance, gaming, hospitality, mining, construction, manufacturing, the media and the legal profession. The group also included elected officials from the Nevada legislature, State Board of Education and local school boards. Key association representatives included members from groups representing Hispanic and African Americans, chambers of commerce, education associations, unions and non-profit collaboratives. Elementary and secondary education was represented by superintendents, district level administration principals, teachers, students. Postsecondary education was represented by an administrator from the Nevada System of Higher Education, a dean, education professors and graduate students. Parents were represented by the Nevada State Parent Teacher Association (PTA) as well as parents from urban and suburban areas. Students were represented by middle and high school pupils. The study conducted in 2007 interviewed
approximately 15 individuals selected from the major constituency groups to replicate the original study.

A case study analysis resulted from information gathered in both the 2004 and 2007 interviews. The data from each process was evaluated and conclusions were reported. The 2007 data was based on responses to new questions, which stemmed from the themes that surfaced in the 2004 interviews.

New questions were created from the four themes that emerged as priorities for the 2007 interviews. The new questions were designed to provide additional insight into those needs that surfaced in 2004. Based on the major themes, the follow-up questions were designed and included in the 2007 needs assessment process. The topic of “Ready to Learn” was expanded to ask the follow questions:

a) What are the early childhood skills that children should possess in order to transition to Kindergarten?

b) How can parents and the community adequately prepare and encourage children so they are ready for school grades K-12?

c) Describe the characteristics of parent involvement that are critical to the success and readiness of children grades K-12?

“Successful Transitions” questions were extended to ask more in depth questions such as:

a) List some of the competencies that students should possess when they graduate from high school.

b) How can the Nevada educational system provide a variety of learning environments to allow students to achieve skills and transition to the next level?
The category “Equity and Access” translated into additional questions related to Nevada’s changing demographics:

a) How can Nevada better prepare for the increasing diversity in the school population?
b) What are some ways to offer multiple teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners in our public schools?

The subject of “Exceptional People” stressed the importance of recruiting and preparing excellent educators for the schools in the state and further questions were asked:

a) What are ways that Nevada can attract, train and honor exceptional people in order to have an excellent cadre of educators?
b) Education is a difficult and challenging career, and what skills do you believe educators need to be successful?

The protocol for the needs assessment process in 2007 replicated the process utilized in 2004. The stakeholder groups in 2007 were carefully selected to represent Nevada’s interest in the education system. Business leaders, key association members, parents, educators and education leaders represented the key stakeholder groups. In 2007, two to four high profile individuals from each group were selected to participate in the follow-up process. The 2007 participants were selected to match the characteristics those interviewed in 2004, where possible. Each interviewee received a telephone call with a follow-up letter outlining the interview process and, a list of the questions, in addition to the date, time and place of the interview. The UNLV Informed Consent document was also included.
The interviews in 2007 were conducted using a semi-structured interview process. A one-on-one discussion with each participant was conducted for 45 minutes to one and one-half hours. Each participant was given a list of the questions in advance of the interview. The interviewer recorded and transcribed the sessions. The interviewer provided clarification to the participants if needed. The interviewer provided cues and delved for more information if the situation seemed to require additional probing.

The data analysis included a complete review of the 2004 interviews, NPEF meeting minutes, summaries of the interviews, a data base of the participants and a final report of the project. Information from the Statewide Needs Assessment Process 2004 was organized into major themes, analyzed and organized into categories. As a result two matrixes were developed to categorize the 2004 data: 1) “Summary of Interviews and Artifacts” from the stakeholder groups (Appendix I) and 2) “Priorities of the Stakeholder Groups” (Appendix II).

A complete analysis was carried out on the 2007 responses and the information was compared to the 2004 results. The comparison matrixes in Chapter Three showed the major themes that were articulated during the interviews in 2004 and the major themes in 2007.

There are several limitations to this study. Since the interview participants in this study were restricted to the state of Nevada, the results may not be generalizable to other states. If the person who was originally interviewed in 2004 was not available for the follow-up interview, another individual was selected to represent that particular stakeholder group. That person may or may not have had exactly the same opinions.
Additionally, the 2004 interviews were conducted by J.D. Hoye and the 2007 follow-up interviews were conducted by the researcher.

Significance of the Study

The study on the Statewide Needs Assessment Process in Nevada was an exploratory descriptive case study to follow-up the interviews conducted in 2004 with interviews in 2007 of selected representatives. The study compared the results of the interviews in 2004 to those gleaned in 2007.

For many years educators, business, government officials and the public at large have searched for solutions to improve America’s education system. Many experts have determined that student achievement, student motivation and educational attainment of students must improve because the global economy demands higher skills and advancement. Over the past 30 years, countless studies, books, articles, surveys and conferences have been conducted nationwide in search of support and answers to improve public education. However, little was known or investigated about the impact and effectiveness of business, community and education partnerships from a research perspective. Studying the effects of these collaborations was needed in order to learn if collaborations have had positive impacts on student achievement, student motivation and educational attainments.

Alliances among business, community and education have a long history in public schools. Increased business and community involvement has been positively linked to a better educated and prepared workforce, even where school districts and school sites
operating with limited budgets must respond to even greater demand for education accountability.

The dissertation was organized into five chapters. Chapter One included the introduction, purpose, overview of the study, a discussion of the major issues from the first study, focus of the inquiry, the general research questions, limitations and the significance of the study. Chapter Two presented a review of the literature on business, community and education history, needs assessments, surveys and perspectives. Chapter Three described the design, the research methods for collecting data, the population included for the study, how the data was analyzed, political issues related to the research and the study limitations. Chapter Four presented the summary of the interviews, the findings and analysis of the data. The conclusions, implications and questions for future studies were highlighted in Chapter Five.

Definition of Terms

"Business education partnerships are defined as coalitions formed by private businesses and schools or school districts. Partnerships have evolved from individual school partnerships, to the introduction of business management principles in public schools. A range of reform ideas, from school choice to higher performance standards have originated from the business sector," Education Week (2005) (Glossary of Terms, p. 1).

"Corporate citizenship" was defined as a term used by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2004) to define attitudes and actions of business toward a wide ranging role
in our society. Business has supported strengthening communities because of the links between strong communities, a healthy society and the business environment (p. 1).

“Globalization” was defined as a contemporary term that incorporates international trade and economic arrangements among countries and governments.

“Intellectual and human capital” described the individual skill sets that are critical to American businesses in order to be competitive domestically and internationally.

“Researcher” refers to the graduate student who conducted the research in 2007.

“Social capital” provided connections among individuals, according to Hanifan (1916, p.1). Putnam (2000) described social capital as, “Social capital networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p.19).

Summary

Business, community and education collaborations had the potential to impact the education system in a positive manner. By the late 20th century, Nevada and other states realized they could not be satisfied with the United States ranking 18th in the world in mathematics and science based on international tests. Especially worrisome were the statistics showing that only 70 percent of students who entered high school in 2000 graduated with a high school diploma. Furthermore, of those students who did graduate, over 25 percent required remedial courses if they attended postsecondary institutions. The statistics mattered greatly to business and community leaders because they show that many students were not prepared for work even after graduating from high school. Only 40 percent of high school graduates in 2000 said they were ready for the workforce or
college, echoed by the 45 percent of employers who confirmed that high school graduates are not prepared for the workforce.

The significant questions related to this study include: Do business, community and education alliances make a difference? Do alliances matter in terms of state, district and school goals and outcomes? There are no easy answers, but business leaders at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Business Education Network Conference in October, 2005 agreed that education must be the nation’s number one priority in order for America to compete in the global economy. The business world’s predictions for America’s workforce in 2020 indicate that 84 percent of jobs will require college degrees.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has continually encouraged all industries, nonprofits and government to become involved with schools to make them more rigorous and relevant. This study represented an opportunity to learn more about alliances that work, how they work and what results are generated or produced. The study was built upon and contributed to the body of business, community and education perspectives relative to education collaborations.

Margaret Mead said many years ago, “We are now at a point where we must educate our children in what no one knew yesterday, and prepare our schools for what no one knows yet.”
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Analyzing the research on business, community and education perceptions about education needs in Nevada included development of a history of the collaborative components in education, a description of the types of relationships, determining the focus of the collaborations in the 1990's, how policy making related to the needs that arose from the alliances, and predicting the future of these relationships. A wide array of resource material existed in the area of corporate, community and education partnerships. Some studies were research based, while many of the results from the studies were found in materials distributed for marketing purposes by business, associations and educational organizations. Documents researched for the study included doctoral dissertations, policy positions by educational organizations, large scale needs assessments and surveys, articles in periodicals, government reports, books and brochures. Research approaches that were utilized in the studies and analysis included quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods of study.

History

Business, community and education partnerships have had a long history of involvement in public schools. With the current need for a better educated and prepared workforce, school districts and school sites operating with limited budgets and even
greater demand for education accountability, it became clear that the time for increased business and community involvement was imminent. The involvement of multiple stakeholders raised key issues, many questions and needs in the educational system.

During the past four decades business, community and education partnerships became integral components of many public schools because they provided mutual benefits for these entities. Remuneration for business included influence over schools in preparing students who will be future employees and advancing the public image of the business enterprise. The community profited through preparing human capital for a democratic society and a prepared workforce. Education advanced through advice from business and the community relative to their influence on organization development and policy decisions. Additional benefits included aligning curriculum and instruction that better prepared students for the workforce, lending expertise to community and corporate entities and donations of money and time to schools. Although these advantages were widely recognized, there was little research about the perceptions of business, community and education members regarding the needs in our schools.

The history of how business realized and fulfilled an education need in the country and communities can be traced back to the early 1800's, when business helped create secondary education institutions in the northeastern United States. In 1831, mill owners in New England established the first public high school because they needed a solution to on-the-job, remedial training (Paige, 2004, p.1). Mill owners realized it would be less expensive to fund public high schools than provide the equivalent education at the factory. Public high schools were established all over the country to provide additional education prior to students entering the workforce.
In addition, American businesses have sustained public schools through taxes, donations and school adoptions. For example, the A. P. Smith Manufacturing Co. v. Barlow et al. case (New Jersey, 1953) resulted in a court decision stating that corporations could donate to schools for reasons that would improve the social and economic conditions of society (Bell, 1962). In *Education and the Business Dollar*, Patrick and Eels (1969) advocated that an investment in education by the business community would create and multiply if thoughtfully executed.

In 1982, the Boston Compact was recognized as the oldest documented business education partnership in the nation. The compact was created to assist with desegregating the city’s school system. The Boston Compact represented a complex collaborative of multiple partners and was looked upon as the model for business education relationships. Coan’s study (1997) pursued the history, development and results of the Boston Compact. The compact was a collaborative composed of businesses, schools and other entities in the Boston, Massachusetts area created with a focus to improve educational opportunities for all students. The predecessor of the compact was a business group named “The Vault”, established in 1959, comprised of twelve major Boston area business leaders.

The Boston business partnership model had evolved as a result of segregation issues in the 1970’s which led to a court order for Boston to desegregate the city’s school system. The 1974 court ordered postsecondary institutions to work with schools and create partnerships. This arrangement was designed to avoid legal obligation and negative stigmas. When the Boston Compact was formally created in 1982, its major goals included summer employment for youth, reduction of dropout rates and academic
achievement. After the economy took a downturn in the late 1980s, unemployment in the area caused many companies to downsize. During this economic crisis, the original compact was modified and became the Boston Compact II, which was signed in 1989. The Boston Compact II implemented site based management principles and parents were provided with choice in selecting schools. Because some community members expressed concern over the lack of success of the original Boston Compact, the Boston Compact II was faced with implementation issues. But by 1994, business and schools had redesigned the agreement, resulting in the Boston Compact III. An implementation measurement committee was formed and indicators for success were established. New goals, including parental involvement and professional development, were added.

The Boston Compact III resulted in improved attendance, better physical school sites, and higher reading and math standards for high school graduation. There were still some challenges in the Boston schools, including a marginally improved dropout rate and a score below the 40th percentile on standardized tests taken by 45 percent of all seniors (Boston Private Industry Council, 1994). Although the Boston Compact remained a model for public/private collaboration, in reality, there was little evidence to support the claim that it had made meaningful educational impact on students. In fact, Coan’s 1997 research found that the Compact may have actually been a disincentive for building community, political and financial support for individual schools because of implementation problems with partnerships, cultural differences between partners and focus on short term gains. Additionally, it was found that the school district may have failed to address curricular issues, supply adequate books and procure appropriate
computer equipment because it was perceived that the business community was already providing for these needs (p.210).

The history of business, community and education relationships included several major studies over the past three decades including the famous *A Nation at Risk* (1983), an indictment of the nation's public education system. Dissertations on the topic of relationships included Grobe (1993), who probed existing knowledge in the field; Archer (1997), who reported on partnerships in South Carolina, and Flynn (1998), who researched perceptions of the business community in Los Angeles County. Most of the work in the field was studied by partnership organizations including the National Association of Partners in Education (2000), the Council for School and Business Partnerships (2001), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2004), and the federal government. Other major contributors to the body of research included business leaders such as Lou Gerstner, formerly president of IBM Corporation, *Fortune* magazine and the Business Roundtable.

The history of business education partnerships indicated there was considerable interest, participation, leadership and research among the various stakeholders which included government, business, education and non profit entities. Beth Buehlmann, Vice President and Executive Director of the Center for Workforce Preparation (2004), addressed the partnership issues when she stated, "What is required is a nationwide commitment by government, businesses, and communities to provide all students with rigorous and challenging academic preparation" (p.13).

The federal government was involved beginning in the 1970’s and encouraged business and education collaboratives. President Ronald Reagan initiated the National
Partnership in Education Program, which launched national interest in the possibility of partnership programs. Consequently, many states started collaborative approaches, including the California Business Roundtable, Minnesota Business Partnership, the Boston Compact and Corporate/Community Schools.

Initially, the federal government provided some leadership in business education partnership development. President Ronald Reagan promoted increasing volunteerism in public schools by pointing out that, “The greater hand of society would improve education more than the federal government” (U.S. Department of Education, 1988). The philosophy continued under President George H. Bush, who supported the Governors’ Charlottesville Education Summit in 1989 on Education, co-chaired by then Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton and South Carolina Governor Caroll Campbell.

Another positive sign was the establishment of the National Alliance of Business (NAB) in 1987, formed to develop a framework of school restructuring components. The Business Education Matrix, designed by NAB, soon became a document to measure the quality of business education partnerships throughout the country. In 1989, NAB developed A Blueprint for Business on Restructuring Education, which contained guidelines for encouraging business involvement. The NAB blueprint encouraged business participation in five areas: 1) management analysis and improvement, 2) staff development, 3) educational advocacy, 4) research and development and 5) application of technology.

Other groups contributed significantly by sponsoring business education partnerships including the National Business Roundtable established during the 1980s. The Business Roundtable encouraged formation of models of their organization at the state and local
level that included membership consisting of both high level business and education leaders. The goal was to make education a priority issue among states and communities.

Another group, the Committee for Economic Development (CED), was a nonprofit, independent research and educational organization striving to improve research in education and economic development (1991). Another nonprofit organization, Council for Aid to Education (CFAE), focused on advising and assisting corporations and government organizations with corporate funding, educational policy and practice.

The need in education for business and community support was also demonstrated through the efforts of professional education organizations. National, state and local education organizations such as the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of School Principals, National Association of Partners in Education, National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) conducted studies and surveys on business education partnerships.

According to the National Association of Partners in Education (NAPE), parent organizations should be considered the primary partners in education. The results of the 1990 National School District Partnership Survey showed parents and small businesses as the major collaborators with schools (Gingold, 2001). That first survey in 1990 was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, provided baseline data which became a benchmark for measuring growth, trends and changes in partnerships between schools and their communities. The 1990 survey was replicated again in 2000 with a 10 percent random sample of school districts. Of the 1,641 surveys mailed, valid responses were received from 556 districts. The survey showed that between 1990 and 2000, local and
state partnership programs grew from 52 percent to 69 percent of the school districts in the sample. The study also revealed that all sectors of the community had moved forward in an effort to improve American education.

As a result of the NAPE survey in 1990, the term partnership was further defined as a "mutually supportive arrangement between schools or school districts and individual volunteers, businesses and government corporations." According to the NAPE data, most alliances involved a memorandum of understanding that identified objectives and activities that would benefit students. NAPE found that the partnerships focused on areas of emphasis which included, "student achievement, technology, school to work, school readiness, family literacy, community involvement, school safety, professional development and systemic change" (p. 4).

Showing a positive trend, the NAPE Partnerships follow-up survey in 2000 indicated that 62 percent of all alliances provided professional development, in contrast to the survey in 1990, which showed that only 34 percent of urban and eight percent of rural school districts provided professional development. The major emphasis of partnership donations in 2000 was in the area of information technology infrastructure, with business providing computers and internet wiring.

Overall, the 2000 NAPE survey found a number of success measures and benefits for both education and business through the interview process. The surveyors found that these measures were based on improving and increasing student achievement, funds for schools, school to career opportunities, topical and community education, student scholarships, parent involvement, teacher preparation, collaboration, publicity, customer
loyalty and profitability, recruitment, better prepared workforce, employee commitment, satisfaction, retention and product development.

By the year 2000, 69 percent of school districts were engaged in collaborative activities with business benefiting over 35 million students. Major areas of education reform were included in these relations, according to the survey, such as: student achievement, technology, school to work, school readiness, family literacy, community involvement, school safety, professional development and systemic change. The 2000 survey of school districts also determined eight key areas of education reform and measured the increase in partnerships in each of these areas: high quality education, after school programs, stay in school partnerships to increase school attendance and reduce high school dropouts, school to work programs, school health initiatives, family support programs, promotion of safe learning environments, community involvement, professional development and technology.

The NAPE Partnerships 2000 report proposed the "next steps" in collaborative development between business and schools: Evaluate the effectiveness of school partnerships; create a national clearinghouse on partnerships; identify and replicate exemplary programs; make partnerships a vital part of professional development strategies; designate a partnership director to maximize partnership efforts; promote schools as community centers; and provide better support for rural schools in their efforts to develop school partnerships (p.57-62).

The future of NAPE has remained a question since early in the 21st century. The organization encountered financial difficulties in 2003 because of rapid expansion into international education spheres. An interview with Dr. Hector Garza, Executive
Director, National Council of Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) revealed that NCCEP had purchased the NAPE data base and was planning to continue and build on the NAPE work (Garza personal communication, May 25, 2004).

Building on the success of partnerships evolving in the 1990s, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) developed The Corporate Imperative: A Business Guide for Implementing Strategic Education Partnerships (1998). A document designed to serve as a leadership guide for business interested in supporting education. The guide gave some specific case examples of how business could participate and encouraged business participation in education collaboratives because of their need for a skilled workforce. The guide stated that, “Research shows that corporate prosperity depends on major education change to maintain a highly qualified, competitive workforce” (p.1).

The Corporate Imperative document illustrated a design model for strategic educational approaches. It explained that business and education goals must be defined by each entity. The nexus of those goals was the juncture where the business and education community could collaborate to work on mutual interests. The strategic planning process between education and business organizations evolved over time. From the business perspective, motivation to participate was driven by:

1) Profit – need to develop a more skilled workforce;

2) Management – to locate and train employees who can adapt to change and work in teams; and

3) Corporate culture – realization that a business’ greatest asset was their employees.
Barriers that might inhibit company support were also considered before implementing the process. These included:

1) Costs – company fiscal departments may view educational approaches as too costly;

2) Limited understanding of educational approaches – unclear comprehension about how the company will benefit;

3) Corporate culture – policies may not support employee involvement in education; and

4) Absence of leaders or a 'champion' for education issues – lack of leaders with experience who can drive collaborative projects.

A final recommendation in the *The Corporate Imperative* was a four-stage action plan for being an active business education partnership. The four steps emphasized:

1) well defined vision, 2) dynamic leadership with 'champions', 3) measurable indicators of success and 4) continuous improvement.

A study by Ballen, Casey and Kanter (1998) on *The Corporate Imperative* provided an analysis of the results and benefits of business involvement in education. The article featured four principal strategies for business to assist in improving education. The Ballen, et al, analysis highlighted four approaches: 1) initiate and develop partnerships with schools and their employees; 2) lead education partnerships with many businesses, community organizations, and schools; 3) implement company policies and programs that promote involvement of working partners and other employees in education; and 4) contribute resources to schools and the partnership process including business expertise.
such as accounting, financial management, and leadership and management development (p. 2).

The Ballen, et al, analysis measured the six major benchmarks that were recommended in *The Corporate Imperative*. The indicators included certain milestones and best practice exemplars, as follows:

1) “Students should be able to read well and independently by the end of third grade.” The goal was pursued in the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry partnership in Appleton, Wisconsin, using the READ WRITE NOW program. Fox Cities' employees read to students over the summer and increased student achievement scores by 80 percent as a result of the program.

2) “Students should study algebra by the end of eighth grade and continue to take advanced math and science throughout high school.” To further this goal, John Hancock Financial Services developed the Wizards program in Boston, Massachusetts, to provide mentoring in algebra and accounting in order to prepare the seventh graders to study algebra by the eighth grade.

3) “Students should see college as an option and be prepared for some training or education past high school.” Shell Oil Company partnered with the Los Angeles Unified School District in offering an 80 hour after-school program that included job searches, interviews, career planning, computer training and communications skills. Over 900 students participated in this program and 80 percent continued onto college after high school.

4) “Students should have a safe haven to go to after school where enrichment and learning takes place.” The American Business Collaboration supported
Y.M.C.A. programs for extended day, summer programs and professional development for teachers.

5) “Classrooms should be connected to the internet and all teachers should be well-trained in using technology.” AT&T Learning Network provided family involvement websites to every public and private school in the state of Maryland. Forty percent of Maryland’s 24 school districts had taken advantage of the program by 1997.

6) “Parents should be involved in their children’s education in school, at home, and in the community.” Hewlett Packard teamed up with the Santa Rosa, California, school district to establish the first “work site public school” on the West Coast, a public school operating at a business office or plant. Employee turnover was reduced by 50 percent; family involvement was increased; student attendance was high and student reading scores were 43 percent higher that those of other local public schools (pp. 4-10).

Niechayev (1992) linked the conceptual framework of business education partnerships to the social exchange theory of Peter Blau, which supported the ideas governing the development of interorganizational relations theory. Niechayev’s framework was a model that followed the initial meeting of the corporate, school and district personnel through negotiation, formal commitment and finally a partnership agreement. Niechayev suggested that further study in the area should include the study of business education goals and leadership, largely because business had been inclined to incorporate a traditional, strategic planning framework in their partnership relationship.
with schools. Niechayev’s proposed partnership framework involved a more successful vision for collaboration, leadership, measurable indicators and continuous improvement.

The Council for Corporate & School Partnerships (2001) published *Guiding Principles for Business and School Partnerships* and *A How to Guide for School Business Partnerships*. The major patron and sponsor for the council was The Coca-Cola Company. This distinguished national council conducted interviews in 2001 with 50 business executives, 261 school administrators, 27 school board members and 20 superintendents to ascertain how business, the community and education were building relationships. The participants were asked a variety of questions that correlated to the development of the relationship: 1) “what was the process for developing business school partnerships in their school or district; 2) what were the most common objectives of business school partnerships; 3) what was the structure for successful partnerships; and 4) what was the level of satisfaction with partnerships” (p. 4)?

Based on the Council’s 2001 nationwide interviews, new information was obtained. The interviews revealed that business interest in education had expanded in recent years. Partnerships had grown with 69 percent of school districts involved, serving approximately 35 million students nationwide. By 2001, small businesses represented the largest share of school partners at 72 percent, with medium size business next at 62 percent and large corporations at 42 percent. School personnel considered student development to be the most valuable result of the partnerships, citing increased student motivation and future career directions to be important outcomes. Overall, the schools gave very favorable ratings to the business partnership.

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Business leaders contacted by the Council in 2001 discussed several factors related to business involvement which included: the process for developing partnerships with schools, the types of partnerships companies have with schools, the factors that determine success for the partnership and the benefits produced by the school and business partnership. Business leaders cited a variety of returns derived from partnerships with schools including human capital development, community development, improved student achievement and positive financial impact.

The Council also determined a list of guiding principles derived from the interviews and survey results. The principles were based on a foundation phase that emphasized communications and established long range goals. The Council determined that the implementation should have a clear management structure, be integrated into the school and business culture and should define measurable benchmarks. In addition, the study found that partnerships should have continuing relationships and support at high levels of management, teacher ownership and community contributions. In conclusion, the Council specified that a quality evaluation process should accompany the partnerships to determine strengths, weaknesses and future directions.

Brown (1999) pursued whether corporate school alliances reflected true commitment to education. Brown classified the partnerships into two categories: 1) those which provided product distribution bonuses, such as CocaCola, which provides schools with rebates on sales, and 2) corporate generated curriculum, which may or may not have contributed to the educational development of learners. Some materials, according to Brown, "contained biased or incomplete information and promoted a viewpoint that favored consumption of the sponsors' product or service (p.1).” Brown found that
corporate support of education worked best if the goals of both parties were considered. Another element important to the partnership was that decision making must be consensus driven. A third party, known as an intermediary or broker, was considered helpful in negotiating partnership arrangements. Intermediaries existed through chambers of commerce, school district partners in education programs and community based organizations.

In order to create successful partnerships, Brown (1999) determined that education must “better prepare all people to participate and be productive, responsible citizens and community members, which can occur only by eliminating barriers that prevent diverse groups from gaining access to such opportunities; educate future leaders as to how the system must change to be more inclusive, enabling all individuals to fulfill their career potential; and initiate a program that will help integrate the skills and information needed to pursue ‘authentic’ learning, learning that is relevant to real life and that has meaning to the learner” (p. 2). It was important to note that Brown recommended that business must not view the education partnership from a profit perspective, but should consider the partnership an investment in the future workforce.

The changing diversity of the student population in American schools was another issue that impacted the future workforce, and the need for business and community representatives to be engaged with schools. Nieto (2000) researched the structural and organizational concerns in schools that impact students. The research indicated that societal issues had a direct influence on the inequities at the school and classroom level.

1) Tracking was linked to diversity and social class differences.
2) Testing had been used to sort students. Many tests were found to be racially biased, and may negatively impact teacher creativity in lesson design, because educators may “teach to the test” (p. 93).

3) The curriculum caused the school and classroom to be disconnected from the community and family life. The curriculum for diverse learners was “watered down” (p. 97) by some teachers.

4) The pedagogy in diverse classrooms, which included the teaching techniques and strategies, did not promote student engagement. Teachers should “develop a ‘humanizing pedagogy’ that values students’ cultural, linguistic and experiential backgrounds” (p. 102).

5) The physical structure included safety and conditions of the school. Schools in inner city areas tended to be more institutional in their appearance.

6) The disciplinary policies were discriminatory, may be misinterpreted and may actually encourage some students to drop out of school. Students of color were more likely to be referred and suspended from school.

7) The limited role of students indicated that students were not empowered, involved or engaged in directing their own education.

8) The limited role of teachers pointed out that educators were not involved in decision making at their site and the need for teacher empowerment.

9) The limited family and community involvement of diverse families was a challenge. Frequently, these families were the most reluctant to become involved because of lack of awareness, language differences, low levels of education and work schedules (pp. 88-109).
Government interest was advanced at the USDOE Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs (OIA) through the creation of the Office of the Corporate Liaison. This office was established in 2001 during the Bush administration to facilitate effective communication between business leaders and program officers at the USDOE. The office was implemented to build mutual understanding of the needs of both the corporate world and local communities, and to promote business education partnerships throughout the country. The mission of the OIA (2001) was “To involve the business community in the Department’s mission of ensuring equal access to education and promoting educational excellence for all children” (p.1).

The Department’s leadership in the field of business, community and education alliances was strengthened under former Secretary of Education Rod Paige. Paige (2004) delivered several speeches to America’s businesses and professional organizations that focused on business and community collaborations with education. His repeated theme was that a thriving national and international economic policy was dependent on sound national education policy. He asked the business representatives to assume the role of education stewards. He stressed that the “best investment in business is an investment in education” (p. 3), and said, “We pay a steep price when we do not educate children” (p.1). He pointed out that the effects of not educating children include: Substantial remedial education costs, longer on-the-job training, more workplace accidents, greater health expenses and lower productivity. Failure to educate was visible in higher crime rates and higher poverty rates. He also emphasized that America’s graduates must compete globally for jobs. Based on modern technology and innovation, the job market required “knowledge workers” who must be well educated. In June, 2004,
Paige addressed the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce stating that, "Education may be the industry upon which all others depend" (p. 1). During the speech he stated, "A recent study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Boston College (2004) found that 48 percent of the companies surveyed considered K-12 education as one of the social issues about which they are most concerned. The study further stated that 32 percent indicated the performance of the public schools was the top social issue that would affect long-term business performance. Fifty-nine percent of businesses said, "Business should play an active role and be 'part of the solution' for problems in K-12 education" (p. 3).

In an address to the Executive Leaders Forum in San Francisco, California in 2004, Paige remarked that American businesses help pay for public education through taxes and have a right to know that the money is being spent wisely and productively. He indicated that business sustains education through taxes, donations and school adoptions. Businesses and foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, General Electric, Time Warner, IBM, SBC Communications, Disney, Toshiba, Honda and others have all donated cash and equipment as well as employee time. Paige (2004) asked the business representatives to be "aggressive, far-sighted, visionary and active partners to help remake our educational system" (p. 3). He asked specifically for their continued involvement, support, investment and interaction. Some of his examples of how business has provided support were school adoptions, in-kind donations, mentoring and tutoring. Business has also provided sponsorships for concerts, plays, field trips, art exhibits and other activities that "feed the mind and soul of children" (p. 3). He asked business representatives to support quality education and education choice. Some of the choices he mentioned were charter schools, opportunity scholarships, magnet schools and other
alternatives (p.3). The Secretary also requested that the businesses and the education community work together to narrow the achievement gap and improve overall student achievement, by helping build additional support for public schools and offer new and innovative solutions to address their needs.

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, who took office in 2005, spoke at several national conferences such as the Business and Professional Women's Leadership Summit in May, 2005. Spellings asked the attendees to support mentoring and tutoring programs in schools because all young men and women need positive role models to follow (p. 3). At the National Association of Manufacturers meeting in September, 2005, Spellings referred to *The World is Flat, A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* by Friedman (2005), which advocates increased worldwide globalization because of the shrinking, 'flat' world. She emphasized the need for students to have better education and training in order to be prepared to enter a "high performing workforce in an ever flattening world" (p. 2).

Business interest and leadership emerged as a priority issue in 2004 when the U.S. Chamber of Commerce developed *The Corporate Citizen* program to share best practices in business and education partnerships. Bill Shore, Director of the U.S. Community Partnerships of Glaxo Smith Kline (2005), testified before the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce. He stated, "Companies rank education as the number one social issue they should help address" (p.4). In 2005, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce continued to support partnerships by establishing the Business Education Network (BEN) to harness the power of individual initiatives which businesses support in an effort to promote strategic change. The recommendations included: 1) identify best practices and
lessons learned; 2) promote communications, coordination, and collaboration; 3) link local practices to national policies; and 4) bring educators, policy makers and business leaders together in alliances for mutual empowerment.

The Business Roundtable Education (BRT) initiative started in 1989 with national education goals for the year 2000. By the year 2000 they realized their work needed to continue. Consequently, the BRT renewed their education initiative and renamed it, *2000 and Beyond*, with the following goals:

- Provide state leadership
- Benchmark standards and tests
- Align philanthropy
- Inform/involve employees
- Ask for high school transcripts
- Name a company education advocate (pp. 1-2).

The Roundtable provided leadership in the development of the *K-12 Education Reform* report (2001) by contributing business expertise to the process. The Roundtable encouraged every company to examine its government and community relations activities, hiring practices, philanthropy and employee volunteer programs to assess how much they were contributing to improved student achievement. The challenge was for education and business to “work for continuous improvements – consciously, comprehensively and cooperatively” (p. 12).

Whereas the emphasis on high school improvement in the Roundtable report was driven by the business and community sector, the interest in restructuring high schools was addressed by the National Governors Association (NGA). Entities such as the Bill
and Melinda Gates Foundation, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Achieve and the College Board were leaders in this initiative because they had expertise in innovative models in business and philanthropy and in measuring the models’ effectiveness in these endeavors.

Recent trends indicated that business, community and education partnerships were critical to the success of education reform in the 21st century. The presentations by USDOE Secretary Paige and Secretary Spellings were seen as a call to business and the community to become involved with local schools. The renewal of the Business Roundtable education initiative, *2000 and Beyond*, and leadership by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in establishing the Business Education Network in 2005 indicated that collaborations were predicted to play a critical role in the future. By 2005, it appeared that research and information on the topic were finally coming from a national business perspective, but the topic needed to be pursued by representatives of the local communities as well.

Another perspective on public education appeared in *The World is Flat. A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, author Thomas Friedman (2005), in which he described a “quiet crisis” in America. Friedman stated there are several “dirty little secrets” about American education. One of the secrets revealed that America’s schools were falling behind in math and science preparation for students. The gap in preparation was impacting the number of students who were choosing to be engineers and mathematicians. One of the issues was the problem of attracting students to the value of science and technology as career choices. Friedman stressed that training students for mathematics and science careers needed to begin in elementary school. He further
argued that a science and engineering curriculum needed to be initiated in U.S. schools in
the elementary grades so that students possessed the skills and talent that would be
needed in 15 years, the approximate amount of time it takes to prepare an engineer from
elementary school to securing an engineering degree (p. 258).

Raising the quality of education and lowering dropout rates would improve the
economy of the United States, according to a study by Richard (2005). He postulated
that gross national product would be increased by 1.6 percent if more students graduated
from high school. Richard also affirmed that, “high school dropouts earn less, pay less in
federal and state taxes, have more health related issues, have a shorter life expectancy by
9.2 years and commit more crimes” (p. 3). He suggested that support was needed from
both the business and education community to improve the high school graduation rate.

The president of On Philanthropy, Carolyn Carvicchio, gave some suggestions for
business on how to develop partnerships to address the problems of high school dropouts
and students who need remediation when they go on to postsecondary education in 2005.
Carvicchio recommended that businesses gather data to assist in how businesses can help
schools improve. She suggested that business leaders and educators get to know each
other. She stated, “Educators valued partnerships that improve student motivation,
provide direction to students about future education choices, offer funding for libraries,
computers and education infrastructure and improve student achievement” (p. 1).
Realistically, she said, “Most partnerships involved common challenges such as cultural
differences and differing expectations between the partners, the sheer scope of the
education challenge, lack of transparency and information regarding available resources,
skepticism and distrust of corporate motives on the part of educators, failure to involve educators and poor communication” (p. 2).

Cavicchio (2005) went on to recommend that business needed to be more involved with school administrators and teachers. For example, she conducted an interview with Howie Schaffer, Public Outreach Manager for the Public Education Network, during which Shaffer suggested, “Business education partners need to sit down together to understand barriers to school improvement and develop a plan of action to address those unmet needs” (p. 1). Schaffer considered partnerships effective when they possessed three common outcomes: “1) sharing and increasing resources, 2) promoting cooperation and 3) enhancing responsibility that led to beneficial educational outcomes and facilitated the exchange of both general and specialized expertise” (p. 1). Schaffer suggested a minimum five year investment in collaboration in order to maximize results.

Another similar study was conducted by Hood and Rubin (2004) which explored business education collaborative activities. The study also described the results that business expected the partnerships to have on students, teachers and educational systems. The researchers used the National Employer Leadership Council (NELC) model to conduct the research. A qualitative design was selected and businesses were interviewed by telephone. Businesses participated in telephone interviews to discuss their partnership activities. The study’s results were organized into categories: working with students, working with teachers, working with administrators, changing company practices and partnerships in action. Working with students was the highest priority for businesses in this study, while working with teachers was second in priority. Relations with administrators were perceived as important, too, because they are the gatekeepers to
systemic change. The results indicated that businesses with a strong commitment to education were involved in partnership activities. A number of partnerships in action were highlighted as models for other businesses and education entities. Hood and Rubin (2004) suggested that additional studies needed to be explored. They stated, “Little is known about the focus, shape and character of existing partnerships and even less is known about what impact they are having on educational systems” (p. 35).

The research by Hood and Rubin (2004) built on information contained in a report conducted by Rigden (1994) which indicated that good partnerships resulted when business focused on four areas: 1) enhanced student learning, 2) extended teacher capacity, 3) increased innovation in school systems and 4) more effective assessment tools. Rigden found results which indicated that relationships lasted five to ten years or longer when they focused on these four areas.

The study entitled Business Education Partnerships (2004) provided an overall view of business education partnerships which included history, types, focus and the future. The report found that the conditions of American education and the nation’s economy contributed significantly to the development of the foundations of the business education relationship. An illustration in the study described the education crisis in public schools during the 1980’s recession. The country was producing entry level workers who were low skilled during an economically demanding era that needed a more skilled and educated workforce. These adverse economic conditions created an environment in which partnerships flourished in an effort to provide common solutions.

In general, education partnerships developed because of the need for workforce development, but educators also wanted to “foster school-community cooperation,
provide incentives for students, supplement curriculum and staff, and obtain equipment," according to Clark (1992, p. 2). The business gains from these relations primarily have included improved public relations and enhanced community image, as indicated by Grobe (1993). Efforts in education reform also have helped drive the collaborations. Businesses were motivated to assist schools with producing better prepared students for the future workforce and they joined educators to accomplish these mutual goals.

According to Grobe, partnership relationships ranged from one-to-one school to business models to complex arrangements with multiple partners supporting schools and school districts. In these relationships, business was usually the benefactor and the school was the beneficiary. Business has always had long term goals in these collaborations, such as a better prepared workforce and the reduction of entry level training costs. In conclusion, Grobe suggested that partnerships operated on six levels: 1) Partners in Special Services (short term projects), 2) Partners in the Classroom, 3) Partners in Teacher Training and Development, 4) Partners in Management, 5) Partners in Systemic Educational Improvement and 6) Partners in Policy (p. 2).

Cappelli, Shapiro and Shumanis (1998) explored the business priorities relative to time and resources dedicated to partnership activities. The study also investigated the impact that business expects from the relationship. Historically, one-to-one partnerships tended to be initiated to solve immediate needs, while the complex partnerships involved multiple businesses, agencies and schools that were focused on long term goals. The Boston Compact of 1982 was the traditional collaborative example, according to Capelli, Shapiro and Shumanis. Other examples of complex partnerships included the

Kubota (1993) indicated that the focus areas for partnerships included classroom teaching and learning “to expose teachers to new technology, give teachers authentic work with real world problems in laboratories or businesses, provide teacher opportunities to interact with scientists and other technically trained professionals and assist teachers in transferring work experience into classrooms” (p. 3). Kabota provided examples such as how the vocational education program at the Los Angles Harbor College, in partnership with Hyundai, advanced the technical training of future automobile technicians. Apprenticeships and work experience programs have also been enhanced by those types of partnerships.

Flynn (1998) studied the perceptions of companies and schools in Los Angeles County that were involved in collaborative relationships. Flynn’s findings indicated that the business education partnerships were not always perceived as a positive experience, but the alliance was thought to be important work for both parties. Her results also specified that schools and businesses needed to establish indicators and accountability in order to adequately measure success. Flynn (1998) presented the history of these relationships in a similar fashion to other studies about business and education partnerships. Her research demonstrated that the past 30 years have been the most significant in terms of business focusing attention on public education.

Kearns (1990) described the specific reasons for the trend toward greater business involvement in education. He found that business believed that public education was not delivering a product that would allow American companies to be competitive. Patrick
and Eells (1969) found there have been many additional reasons for business support of education such as encouraging current students to be future employees and lowering business training costs by having public education produce students that have entry level workforce skills.

Multiple studies have been conducted by the federal government, corporations and professional associations which found that although advanced workforce skills are needed for the technological workplace, fewer students were graduating from public schools well prepared in terms of technical and interpersonal skills. Consequently, corporations were then forced to spend billions of dollars on basic academic and interpersonal skills training. The National Science Foundation, National Assessment of Educational Progress, Institute for Educational Leaderships and the National Association of Manufacturers had confirmed repeatedly that schools were not preparing American young people for the workforce as well as their counterparts in Japan and Germany.

Clark’s (1992) investigation uncovered three types of educational partnerships. The first was an institutional one-on-one which involved tutoring, mentoring, recognition, incentives, field trips and dropout prevention. Cooperative agreements were next and consisted of a needs assessment process, research, development, training, technology, advocacy, policy development, innovation and restructuring. Collaborative partnerships were the third type and were broad based and multiagency. Collaboratives included components such as long term institutional and visionary goals, shared decision making, advocacy and policy making, integration of multiple schools and cross institutional goal setting.
The South Carolina Business Education Partnership (BEP) led the country in the business education model from 1983 to 1989, according to a case analysis by Peterson (1989). Peterson identified four key components that kept public school reform high on the public policy agenda in South Carolina: 1) development, 2) promotion, 3) funding and 4) implementation and maintaining momentum. The state's governor at the time, Governor Richard Riley, believed strong participation from business leadership would have a positive influence on education. The BEP was considered a model based on longevity and continued public interest according to Archer (1997). When Governor Campbell later took office, he continued some of the momentum by legislatively mandating the BEP. Archer concluded that:

1) The governor was the foremost cheerleader for educational reforms.

2) Chief Executive Officers and upper management were needed to serve on long-standing policy partnership committees to ensure that the voice of the business community is heard in the educational reform process.

3) A policy partnership with a commitment from the state business community and state chamber of commerce was necessary.

4) Important members of the legislative committees that fund education programs, as well as members of any state level policy partnership needed to be involved.

5) Membership in a state level policy partnership needed to include editors of the top newspapers in the state to ensure that education remains at the top of the public policy agenda (p. 135-136).
The reason why South Carolina embarked on one of the most intense education business partnerships, according to Archer (1997), was its long history of student academic underachievement and poorly funded schools. A business coalition to influence education policy was the state's attempt to improve its education system. One committee was appointed to raise the sales tax a penny and another to provide accountability. These committees were responsible for securing legislation to support the tax and partnership approach. They were successful in passing the Education Improvement Act I (EIA I) with oversight and accountability provided by the BEP.

Another bill, EIA II, was eventually passed, and went by the name Target 2000, in which education was restructured into two academic tracks and a tech prep track. The results indicated there was improvement in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and more students were enrolled in advanced placement courses.

Archer also conducted research on the history of business education alliances in 20th century America (1997). He found that business executives had long supported education by electing business representatives to local school boards. As business executives moved to suburbs in the 1950s, there was a decline of high level management in the nation's urban public schools. In the 1970s, business faced an economic depression which forced most organizations to restructure. Also, increased demands of technology, mathematics and science in the 1980s created the demand for a highly skilled and educated workforce.

Archer followed his national study by returning to South Carolina and asking questions about levels of participation and sustainability in the state's business education partnerships. The methodology used in Archer's research was a case study approach.

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which provided descriptions of the program. He conducted interviews with members of
the BEP who had served since the inception, former members as well as current
members.

Meanwhile, in 1998, a symposium at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School
of Government, convened business and education leaders to discuss business trends that
influence education reform. Then U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander stated,
“Corporate efforts to promote reform have been too timid and business leaders should
stop checking their entrepreneurial skills at the doors of school and help promote charter
schools and other reforms” (p. 2). Dave T. Kearns, the former chairman of Xerox
Corporation who attended the symposium, had written *Winning the Brain Race: a Bold
Plan to Make our Schools Competitive* in 1989. Therefore, Kearns was already a staunch
supporter of business involvement in education by the time the symposium convened.
Representatives at the symposium agreed with Kearns that many companies had reduced
support for public schools in the late 1990s. One of the reasons for withdrawal of support
was corporate consolidation through merger and acquisitions as stated by Walsh (1998).

Many researchers have concluded that the problems that faced our urban centers,
including education, cannot be solved by any single sector. Public and private
partnership was the answer according to experts cited in a study conducted by Austin
(2000). Austin indicated there were four specific reasons for business involvement in
social engagement: 1) healthy communities are a competitive advantage, 2) community
service makes better leaders, 3) service is part of the local business culture and 4) crisis
can trigger collaboration (p. 2).
Austin found that the business, community and education collaboratives that functioned well had evidence of cross sector contributions because of several factors: Public and private entities ensured participation that fostered respect and trust; they built relationships that were trustworthy and created value by bringing management and financial expertise to the table; participants achieved accountability and ‘kept the torch lit’ (p. 3-5). According to Austin, these types of coalitions were ‘win-win’ situations for their communities (p. 4).

Esteemed partnership models recognized nationally included Cleveland Tomorrow, Detroit Renaissance, Central Atlanta Progress and New York’s David Rockefeller Fellows Program. Many of these models have worked toward improving multiple and complex societal issues in their cities with education being a focal point, because of the future impact on the quality of economics and life in their cities.

Most recently, the new Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce released their study, *Tough Choices, Tough Times*, (2007). The report revisited the work done by the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce in 1990. The new commission reaffirmed that a major reform of education is needed because of the demands of the global workforce. The report stated that our current education system was designed for another, older era and their recommendations included:

1) Assume that we will do the job right the first time;

2) Make much more efficient use of the available resources;

3) Recruit from the top third of the high school graduates going on to college for the next general of school teachers;
4) Develop standards, assessments, and curriculum that reflect today’s needs and tomorrow’s requirements;
5) Create high performance schools and districts everywhere – how the system should be governed, financed, organized and managed;
6) Provide high quality, universal early childhood education;
7) Give strong support to the students who need it the most;
8) Enable every member of the adult workforce to get the new literacy skills;
9) Create personal competitive accounts – a GI Bill for our times; and
10) Create regional competitiveness authorities to make America competitive (pp.9-20).

In Nevada, there were a number of studies in 2004 to 2005 conducted that found needs in the education system similar to those found in other states. Three groups have conducted research including the Harwood Group, the Nevada Community Foundation and West Ed in partnership with the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Center for Education Policy Studies. The first two studies focused on the quality of life in the greater Las Vegas community and the third focused on education improvement throughout the state.

The Harwood study, On the American Frontier: Las Vegas Public Capital, (2004) provided some information relative to the education system in southern Nevada. The findings also included the rationale for the issues. First and foremost, substandard training of teachers was highlighted as a key indicator. Second, lack of home support was identified as contributing to Nevada’s low graduation rates. The researchers found that dropout rates increased when parents were poor, because caregivers were abusive
and children felt pressured to earn money. They further determined that parental attitudes toward education mattered greatly and Nevadans were less likely to support an increase in education resources than residents in many other states. Again, low social capital was directly implicated; where the community shuns the burden, it is left to the parents and parents alone to cope with the shortages in education and social needs (p. 6). The report admitted, however, that the public schools in Las Vegas are overwhelmed with growth (p. 13).

The Nevada Community Foundation convened a Community Conference in Las Vegas in 2006 to develop a process for making investment decisions based on needs within the Las Vegas community. The participants of the conference included Las Vegas residents who reflected the wide demographic diversity of the Las Vegas community. Participants were asked four key questions to determine common ground for the analysis of the process:

1) "What are your aspirations for this community?"

2) What challenges do you see in realizing these aspirations?

3) What are the implications of the gap between the current reality and your aspirations?

4) What will it take for this process to be effective in the eyes of the community" (p. 5)?

While many responses were related to the community at large, the major concern specific to education was the increase in high school dropout rates.

In 2005, the West Ed Center on Policy collaborated with the Center for Education Policy Studies (CEPS) at UNLV to address important education policy matters necessary
for assisting school improvement in Nevada. The CEPS report highlighted Nevada’s urgent need to upgrade the state’s education system. It aligned with the Nevada Department of Education’s School Improvement Plan 2004 priorities and expanded them with several additional recommendations: 1) make education a statewide priority; 2) develop a comprehensive system for the preparation, induction and professional development of teachers, with particular emphasis on strategies for teaching English language learners; 3) use consistent and relevant data to drive improvement and evaluate progress; 4) identify and incorporate research based strategies to improve performance and reduce achievement gaps; 5) implement a statewide high school initiative; 6) focus comprehensively on early childhood; and 7) provide the resources and support needed to do the job (pp. 2-3).

The West Ed report also listed the major challenge areas for the Nevada education system which were connected to the rapid growth and economic development. The challenge areas were: 1) a rapidly increasing enrollment which requires massive effort to find and keep highly qualified teachers; 2) escalating numbers of students require rapid construction of new school facilities; 3) the state’s labor market creates disincentives for some students to stay in school; and 4) state fiscal investment in education is low, and particularly low relative to need (pp.10-12).

The WestEd report provided a noteworthy crosswalk with Nevada’s Statewide Needs Assessment Process conducted in 2004. The four priority needs identified in that document correlated closely with the recommendations in the WestEd Report. The crosswalk between the two reports indicated that the need areas were almost identical: 1) “Exceptional People” - teacher preparation and professional development; 2) “Ready to
Learn" - early childhood; 3) “Successful Transitions” - high school initiative; and 4) “Equity and Access” - improve achievement and reduce the gaps (p.26).

The perceptions of education need in Nevada captured through the needs assessments conducted in 2004 and 2007 mirrored other studies conducted in other organizations throughout the country. A national perspective on education seemed to indicate that readiness to learn, dropout prevention, transitions to postsecondary education and/or work, parent involvement, equity and access and teacher quality were priorities that resonated in every state, district and school.

Flynn’s 1998 study, conducted in Los Angeles County, asked, “Can the public education system build an alliance with the business community that will enhance student’s ability to acquire the skills they need to enter the workforce prepared, thus enabling us to compete as a nation” (p. 7)? Because Flynn addressed many of the same questions and issues relevant to the Statewide Needs Assessment Process conducted in Nevada in 2004, the problem addressed by Flynn in 1998 continued to be applicable. Flynn’s results clearly demonstrated that the association between business and education partners was perceived as an important effort by both parties but was not always a positive experience. In order to improve the experience, Flynn found that businesses needed to set specific goals and objectives with the school site partner. Schools additionally needed to set goals and measure the results of the partnership experience.

Flynn addressed the following research questions:

1) “Is there a need for the business community to become involved in public education?
2) To what extend has the business community as a whole, as well as individual companies, become involved in public education?

3) What agenda and accountability measure are used by business and education when working with each other?

4) What are the perceptions that the public education system and business have of each other and their ability to work as a partnership?

5) Are schools and businesses in alliances working together as a partnership or for their own needs” (pp. 7-8)?

Flynn reported that although business realized the importance of providing financial assistance to schools, education was doing a poor job of preparing students, and there was little evidence of accountability and impact. Even though students were considered unprepared for the workforce, business did not want to spend money training them, nor could business and education agree on what should be contributed to schools. Both parties felt, however, that partnerships should be strengthened, since follow-up interviews had indicated there was tension in the relationship.

Nevada’s Statewide Needs Assessment Process, 2004, produced similar results, although they were expressed slightly differently. Nevada’s interview participants stated that Nevada schools were not preparing students adequately for the future, more accountability measures were needed and strong, positive relationships should exist between the communities and the schools.
Description

The literature review indicated that multiple methods have been used in prior studies. Some business, community and education partnership research studies have been based on quantitative processes such as surveys. Other research studies have relied on qualitative approaches such as descriptive case studies and interviews. Other research models have relied on mixed methods incorporating both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Focus

The research on business, community and education alliances provided information from a wide variety of sources which incorporated the perspectives of business, education, government and the public in general. The review of the literature revealed a vast array of studies and expert sources. The research confirmed there was considerable curiosity about the subject. Research reviewed for the study of the literature indicated that the questions posed in the study needed to be very specific and focused. Based on the review of literature, some commonalities surfaced in the research, studies and literature. Common themes found in the literature included questions and responses such as those business and education examples listed in the following paragraphs.

What role do business education partnerships play in education today? According to the NAB (1989) study, business education partnerships played a definite role with 69 percent of schools reporting some type of partnership activity. Business has been an influential ally for education through management analysis and improvement, staff
development, educational advocacy, research and development and application of technology.

What impact and value do corporate, community and school alliances have in the current education environment? Business education partnerships such as the Boston Compact have contributed in a variety of ways that included improving student achievement, technology, school-to-work, school readiness, family literacy, community involvement, school safety, professional development and systemic change.

What are the benefits for business? Based on the research, business in general has been consistently interested in developing a competent workforce as well as the economic development of their communities. The needs for human capital development, community development, improved student achievement and positive financial impact were expected to continue throughout the 21st century and beyond.

What "Return on Investment" (ROI) will business earn? The ROI for business was generally considered long term, had resulted in a better educated and prepared workforce and improved community relations. Clark (1992) stated that improved public relations, enhanced community image and better prepared students for the future workforce were the ultimate goals for business engagement in education at that time.

Future Policy Implications

What are the benefits for education alliances with business and the community? The National Association of School Principals (2001) found that the main partnership benefits for schools and the community also benefit business. The benefits for schools included improving and increasing student achievement, funds for schools, school to career
opportunities, topical and community education, student scholarships, parent involvement, teacher preparation and collaboration. The Partnership 2000 (NAPE, 2002) study demonstrated that the benefits reached 35 million American students. An estimated 3.4 million volunteers were also involved who donated approximately 109 million hours. The estimated value to schools from 1990 to 2000 was $2.4 billion. For business collaborations, publicity, customer loyalty and profitability, recruitment, better prepared workforce, employee commitment, satisfaction and retention of employees and product development topped the list of partnership benefits.

Will business play an increasing role in American education in the 21st century? The Partnerships 2000 study (NAPE, 2002) indicated that business was expected to be an important player in evaluating the effectiveness of school partnerships; creating a national clearinghouse on partnerships; identifying and replicating exemplary programs; making partnerships a vital part of professional development strategies; designating a partnership director to maximize partnership efforts; promoting schools as community centers; and providing better support for rural schools in their efforts to develop school partnerships (pp. 58-62).

The nation's top business, government and education leaders have been paying attention to the impact of business education relationships. The true impact needs further assessment. As former IBM and RJR Nabisco's CEO Lou Gerstner (1994) said, "Education is too important to be left to educators. It is everyone's problem."
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

The study ascertained the perceptions of business, community and education representatives on the education needs in Nevada. The research updated what was gleaned from Nevada’s Statewide Needs Assessment Process in 2004 by expanding the questions and re-interviewing a selected group of participants in 2007. The method stated below described the design, the research methods for collecting data, the population included for the study, how the data was analyzed, political issues that were related to the research and the study’s limitations.

A descriptive case study approach was used to evaluate the perceptions of business, educators and community members who were interviewed. Creswell (2005) explained a descriptive case study as an ethnographic variation that asks the questions what, how many and how much with a particular group (p.589). The researcher provided an in-depth description of the process based on semi-structured interviews. The questions from the 2004 interview results were expanded in 2007 to delve deeper into the opinions and perspectives of the participants, who were business representatives, educators, politicians and community members. After a thorough review of the 2004 interview results, plus minutes of Foundation meetings and other artifacts, new questions were developed for the 2007 process to investigate further insights from Nevada stakeholders in education.
The design of the new query was derived from a rationale for selecting specific questions for the interview process. The method also indicated how the data would be collected in order to preserve the integrity of the reviewer comments as well as how the data was analyzed, coded and categorized to determine major issues that surfaced from the interviews. Other important considerations by the researcher were the political implications of the needs assessment process and the ways in which the study was restricted.

Participants

The protocol method for the needs assessment process in 2007 simulated the process employed in 2004. The major stakeholder groups were chosen to represent Nevadans’ interest in the education system. Business members, key association leaders, parents, elected officials, educators and education leaders comprised the key stakeholder groups. A sample group, which included two to four influential individuals from each set, was selected to participate in the follow-up process in 2007. The participants were the same individuals interviewed in 2004 where possible. Participants were selected who represented diverse perspectives on education in Nevada, including those considered to be supporters inside and outside the education system, as well as those who have been critical of the system.

Specific selection of the participants was based on the 2004 stakeholder list. The participant list provided the organization name, contact person, street, city, county, region of the state, phone and fax, email, data of the interview, time, place, category of the interview, ethnicity, gender and parental status. The researcher determined that two to four representatives from each group would be a representative sample. Therefore, four
business representatives were selected to represent industries that were part of the major economic development process in Nevada. The industries selected were human resources, finance, real estate and manufacturing because of their statewide influence on the state’s economic progress. In addition, two members representing key ethnic minority associations were selected and two members were selected from chamber of commerce organizations. Two parents were interviewed; one of whom represented the statewide PTA organization, and the other a parent at large. Three elected officials who held state elective offices were interviewed. Finally, four educators were selected to represent education: one from a K-12 classroom perspective, two who held high level positions in education leadership and another who represented the higher education perspective.

The diversity and geographic location of the 2007 interviewees were other important considerations. Interviewing a culturally diverse group that closely resembled the demographics of contemporary Nevada was very important to the research. Because Nevada’s population represented a bimodal state, representation from urban and rural areas was critical to gathering a statewide perspective. After the interviewee selection process was finalized, each interviewee received a written invitation to participate, a telephone call with a follow-up letter outlining the interview process, the date, time and place of the interview and the UNLV Informed Consent document for signatures (Appendix III).

The confidentiality of the interviewees who participated in the research process was carefully protected. The names of the individuals, corporations, associations and school districts were not disclosed as part of the research process. Assurance was given to each
participant that references to individual industries, associations, school districts and elected officials would not be disclosed in the research.

Participant access was gained using several strategies. Many of those who were selected to interview were known to the researcher. The researcher had initiated the needs assessment process in 2004 and arranged for most of the interviews at that time. Many of those interviewed in 2004 had the same business, education or community affiliations as in 2007. The researcher telephoned each of the selected interviewees personally to determine if they would be interested and available to be interviewed for the follow-up Needs Assessment Process. If a person was not available, another person from the same category was selected for the process.

Data Collection

The researcher based the data collection process on procedures defined by several experts in the field, Yin and Creswell. Yin (2003) described the interview process as asking key respondents questions about facts as well as opinions. He also stated that a researcher, “May ask the respondent to propose his or her own insights into certain occurrences or may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry” (p.90). He further indicated that case study interviews often require the researcher to operate on several levels at the same time, obtaining responses to the questions while putting forth “friendly and non-threatening” questions (p. 90). Creswell (2005) recommended that, “During the actual interview, use icebreakers to open the conversation, keep opinions to yourself and be prepared to keep the interviewee on track” (p. 225).
The interviews in 2007 utilized a semi-structured interview process. The individual interviews were planned to last 45 minutes to one and one-half hours. Each participant was given a list of the questions in advance of the interviews. The interview was conducted in a private setting, such as an office or conference room or by telephone conference call. Each interview was taped with the permission of the interviewee. The interviewer used an in-depth, open-ended questioning technique. The researcher asked each question, waited for the response and provided clarification on the question if needed. The interviewer would provide cues and delve for more information if the response seemed to need additional information.

Treatment of Data

The data analysis included a complete examination of the 2004 interviews and the expanded questions for the 2007 process. The comparison matrix in Table One showed the major themes that were articulated during the interviews in 2004 and the major topical areas and research questions in 2007.

The first part of the analysis after the interviews were conducted included transcribing the interviews verbatim. Creswell (2005) described the second stage of the process, “Grounded theory design which is a systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that examines, at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or interaction about a substantive topic” (p. 396). The grounded theory design was applicable because the researcher determined that the theory was explained based on the data. During the second phase, the researcher examined each of the interview transcripts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nevada Needs Assessment Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2004 Interviews</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ready to Learn</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners maximize the benefits of the public education system by achieving proper foundation skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successful Transitions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for college and careers should have equal standing in the educational system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity and Access</strong> –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students deserve equitable access to a quality education.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Exceptional People** – | **Exceptional people** – |
| An education system attracts, trains and honors exceptional people. | 1. What are ways that Nevada can attract, train and honor exceptional people in order to have an excellent cadre of educators? |
| | 2. Education is a difficult and challenging career and what skills do you believe educators need to be successful? |
for key words or phrases that were repeated, similar or provided additional insights. The responses were also examined to discover trends, consistencies, inconsistencies and frequencies of comments. After a careful review, the third component of the process was to label the categories with preliminary terms or concepts. Fourth, an extensive coding system was utilized to construct major themes that arose from the interviews. The coding system organized information from the typed interviews into "chunks" or categories. A sample table of the coding system is the Categorical Response Trends (Appendix IV).

Finally, an analysis was carried out on the data and the information was organized into matrixes so the outcomes could be compared to the 2004 results. From the breakdown of the information, major ideas or themes were determined.

A number of significant quotes resulted from the interviews which the researcher categorized. The quotes indicated a number of ideas and model programs that may be useful for implementation and further assessment.

Careful examination of the data was essential to maintain the integrity of the qualitative information so that it was not merely subjective. The coding of the data obtained through the interviews assisted in the triangulation process. In the study's context, triangulation was the process utilized to provide supporting evidence from the different categories of the participants. Yin (2003) described triangulation within case studies as the different perspectives within the same data set (p. 99). The researcher attempted to find evidence from each source group or category to support a common theme(s). Thus, a more comprehensive and convincing analysis was attained by constructing the validity of the conclusions through triangulation.
Across case synthesis resulted from the two case studies. The first study in 2004 was an independent study authored by J.D. Hoye. The second study in 2007 was conducted by the researcher on a smaller, sample group.

The political implications of the study were varied. Since the questions were developed to elicit responses from a broad spectrum of the population, it is expected the people who were interviewed would comment on issues of critical importance to education from their perspective. People outside of the education domain are influenced by their own education; what they read, see and hear in the media; and by current connections to the education community. Educators who were interviewed were predisposed by the day to day operation of the industry in which they are employed. In the needs assessments conducted both in 2004 and 2007; the issues that arose from the interviews mirrored some of the key themes in the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and priority topics considered by the Nevada legislature in 2003 and 2007.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations in this study. Since the interview participants in this study were restricted to the State of Nevada, the results may not be generalizable to other states. If the person who was originally interviewed in 2004 was not available for the follow-up interview, another person was selected to represent that particular stakeholder group, whose opinions may have differed somewhat. The sample size in 2007 was smaller and did not represent as large a set as those interviewed in the initial needs assessment. The 2004 interviews were conducted by J.D. Hoye and the 2007 follow-up interviews were conducted by the researcher.
The results from the study provided opinions and perspectives related primarily to K-12 education rather than to the entire K-16 education system. A review of the perspectives of the entire system may need to be conducted at another time by another researcher.
CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the business, education and community perceptions regarding the needs of the educational system in Nevada. The Nevada Public Education Foundation commissioned a study on the education needs in 2004 to update the foundation’s strategic plan and to design a plan for securing resources and making investments that would enhance the educational system in Nevada. The 2007 study was pursued to follow up the prior research.

The research questions were:

1) What were the perceptions of leaders across education, business, community and political arenas regarding the educational needs of children and students in the State of Nevada?

2) How have the perceptions of education, business, community and political leaders changed from the 2004 study and the 2007 study?

Description of Sample

The sample group consisted of several people who were employed in business but also involved in state associations such as chambers of commerce or community based organizations. Thirteen of the 15 people were parents who had family members, children, step-children or grandchildren, educated in the state of Nevada. Parents were
represented by 13 of the 15 people, or 87 percent, of those interviewed. One of the parents represented the statewide PTA organization and another was a parent-at-large who was appointed to a state level position. Of the 15 people interviewed, four members, or 27 percent, represented business disciplines including human resources, finance, real estate and manufacturing. Two members, or 13 percent, were selected from chamber of commerce organizations and two members, or 13 percent, from ethnicity based associations, participated in the study. Three elected state officials, or 20 percent, along with two people, or 13 percent, were appointed state officials, and were interviewed. Four educators, or 27 percent, participated including one from a K-12 classroom perspective, two who held high level positions in K-12 education leadership, and another who represented the higher education perspective. A representative sample by category is listed in Table Two.

The diversity and geographic location of the 2007 interviewees were other important considerations. A culturally diverse group that closely resembled the demographics of contemporary Nevada was represented. Ten, or 67 percent, of those interviewed were Caucasian, two, or 13 percent, were African American, two, or 13 percent, were Hispanic and one, or seven percent, was Native American. Eight of the respondents were women, or 53 percent, and seven were men, or 47 percent. The cultural diversity by category is listed in Table Three.

Because Nevada's population represented a bimodal state, representation from urban and rural areas were included. Ten members, or 67 percent, represented urban Nevada and five, or 33 percent, represented rural Nevada. Five members, or 40 percent, were from southern Nevada and ten members, or 60 percent, of the sample group were.
Table 2

Categorical Representation of Sample Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Educators Elected officials</th>
<th>Appointed officials</th>
<th>Association leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

Table 3

Demographic Representation of Sample Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Business Educators officials</th>
<th>Elected officials</th>
<th>Appointed officials</th>
<th>Association leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

Geographic Representation of Sample Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Churchill</th>
<th>Clark</th>
<th>Douglas</th>
<th>Elko</th>
<th>Lyon</th>
<th>Washoe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Represen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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from northern or rural Nevada. Six of the 17 Nevada counties had respondents represented in the process as shown in Table Four.

Ten of the 15 people interviewed in 2004 were also part of the 2007 process. Of the original ten people, several of those had changed positions. Most importantly, all of the people interviewed represented a significant group of stakeholders because of their broad based involvement in multiple organizations and roles in the state.

Summary of the Interviews

The interview questionnaire consisted of nine items which followed the interview protocol set forth in the letter of invitation; a letter that confirmed the date, time and place of the appointment; contained the interview questions and the UNLV IRB Protocol that needed to be signed. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted in person or by telephone, depending on the schedule of the participant. The interview session spanned a three month period in February, March and April, 2007. All participants who were originally selected were involved in the complete process, i.e., there were no last minute substitutions. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. The questions were semi-structured and responses were open-ended. Many of the original participant comments were repeated by those in the 2007 interview group. Because some interviews were longer than others, the perspectives stated from some of those interviewed contained much more information than those that were shorter in duration. Some participants were more succinct and to the point while others expanded on their responses. Each participant had multiple responses to the questions in each category and subcategory.
The general summary of the data set forth in the study included responses by all those interviewed without regard to the categories they represented. The topical areas and major questions were listed in a matrix format. The responses were organized, tabulated and listed in order of priority on the worksheet matrix.

Analysis of the Data

Analysis of the data resulted in major themes in each category. The major themes are included in Table Five.

In the 2007 process, there were additional findings from the data revealed through an analysis of the noteworthy comments within each category. The significant quotes in 2007 were reviewed by category and reflected the annotations gathered throughout the interview process. The principal difference in the new interview process was that expectations, ideals, model programs and innovations were stressed, rather than needs in the education system. Additionally, the participants were more specific and enthusiastic about their perspectives.

Ready to Learn 2007

a) What are the early childhood skills that children should possess in order to transition to Kindergarten?

The primary theme that emerged from the “Ready to Learn” category were respondents indicated that young children should know their ABC’s, be able to count to ten and know their colors. A large majority also stated that students should possess social skills. A greater percent of the participants indicated that following rules and directions were critical to children’s success in Kindergarten. Slightly less than the majority of
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<th>Nevada Overall Needs Assessment Themes</th>
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<td><strong>2004 Interviews</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ready to Learn</strong></td>
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<td>An overarching approach to improve parental involvement was needed</td>
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<td><strong>Successful Transitions</strong></td>
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<td>High stakes exams resulted in larger numbers of dropouts</td>
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<td><strong>2004 Interviews</strong></td>
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<td>Lack of alignment between graduation</td>
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<td>Uneven application of ongoing</td>
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<td>career/further education planning</td>
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<td>Students should have effective</td>
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<td>communication, computation and</td>
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<td>Career Technical Education (CTE) needs to be expanded</td>
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<td>Increased options and flexibility are needed</td>
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<td>Career academics and magnet programs need to be expanded</td>
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<td>Relevance and rigor are needed in coursework</td>
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<td><strong>Equity and Access</strong></td>
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<td>Lack of strategic response to the increasing diversity in school population</td>
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<td>Cultural competency is essential in our increasingly diverse population</td>
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<td>Progress of diverse and ESL students should be closely monitored</td>
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<td>Nevada should have high expectations for all students</td>
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<td>Educators should recognize the individual characteristics of students</td>
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<td>Educators should have high levels of cultural consciousness</td>
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<td>Nevada Overall Needs Assessment Themes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2004 Interviews</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Educators need to be from more diverse cultures</td>
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**Exceptional People**

| Quality teachers | Compensation for educators should be increased |
| Staff development | Educators should have a passion for teaching |
| Leadership development (youth and adults) | Educators need to be honored and respected |
| Community engagement/organizing | Teachers should be knowledgeable about their content area |
| Policy/institutionalizing change | Teachers need to be caring and compassionate |
| Communication | Teachers need to use assessment data to inform instruction |
| Capacity building | Teachers need to raise the achievement level of every student |
respondents stated that children should have self discipline and take responsibility for their actions. About the same number of people said that children should be interested in books, getting along with others and be motivated to learn. Four believed they should be interested in school, possess gross and fine motor skills and have cognitive skills as well as general knowledge. Other responses were mainly in the areas of wellness, health and safety.

A number of the quotes from the “Ready to Learn” category were related to model programs and innovations. An organizational leader said that, “Organizations and communities can help children deal with the negative aspects of social relations as well as the positive.” A legislator suggested that more Nevadans should take advantage of programs such as, “The Nevada Classroom on Wheels (COW) program. COW provides early childhood service to low-income children, ages three to six, and their parents in their neighborhoods as well as offering free, bilingual preschool classes for at-risk, underserved children. Parents also receive two hours of parenting instruction per week.”

b) How can parents and the community adequately prepare and encourage children so they are ready for school grades K-12?

A majority of those interviewed stated that services were needed to support and encourage parents. They also said that schools and support systems should be parent friendly to encourage more people to take advantage of what is offered. Half of the respondents believed that children should be read to in the home, and that they should have multiple socialization opportunities. Another group of those interviewed felt that books and supplies should be available in the home and that communication skills should be taught in the home. Many of those interviewed stated that students should be briefed
about Kindergarten before they go to school, and that parents should provide role models. Additionally, the participants felt that access to libraries, exposure to the arts, and teaching responsibility should be done by parents. Four people also stated that the population as a whole needed to have a better understanding of the bilingual community.

An innovative idea was suggested by one interviewee when he stated, “The media is always looking for things to talk about, and that may be a way to get information out about parent education.” Another interviewee was very specific about accountability and said, “Narrow the variability of the incoming groups of students, especially between Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, because narrowing at the start of the process will ensure greater success though the educational progression and we end up with a much better product.”

An example of a model program was stated, “The Kinder Amigas Program offers kindergarten children and their parents’ assistance with English language acquisition so they can better meet the classroom academic and behavioral expectations.”

c) Describe the characteristics of parent involvement that are critical to the success and readiness of children grades K-12.

Parent involvement was clearly a critical component to the success and readiness of children and 14 of the 15 interviewed said that parents should be involved in their children’s lives. A majority of the responses tallied indicated that parents should take interest in and participate with their children. Another large number of those interviewed stated that communication, as well as parent education and training, were important. They also responded that children should be read to and taught how to interact with other children. Many stated that a stable environment, with structure and routine, was the best
atmosphere for all children K-12 and that meeting with teachers at school was significant. Others responded that parents should teach children discipline and responsibility, and that children should feel safe at home and school. Several felt that talking to children about their feelings was critical.

The category of “Ready to Learn” included comments relative to the expectations and ideals of the parents. An interviewee said, “Parents should encourage every kind of expression there is including oral language, written language and other forms of communication.” Another said, “Parents should teach students social skills, self discipline, responsibility, how to follow rules and about sharing.” An interviewee stressed that, “Every parent must be aware of the things they must do to support their children in their educational endeavors.” Another interviewee had almost the exact comment, “Parents need to understand what is happening in the classroom and be engaged with their children’s teachers. They give too much responsibility to teachers or make too many assumptions about what is happening in the classroom.” An educator said, “Parents must be very involved in their children’s lives and provide ‘fun-damental’ time for them such as recreation.” Another said, “Parents play a critical role in helping children at every age, including high school. I think, quite often, they don’t maximize their opportunity to be involved with their children and their decision making process about careers and other choices.”

Several interviewees made comments similar to this one, “Some parents were not successful in school; therefore they do not have the skills to prepare their own children.” Another interviewee stated that, “Every parent should be a child’s first teacher and allow all children access to high quality early care and education.” There was also a comment
about school climate, “The environment in the school has to be amenable to parents being there and being involved.” One interviewee indicated, “There are two levels of parents: those who already know how to access information and that maximize the system, and those who are not aware of what is available.” Many of the interviewees provided reflections relative to expectations at home including, “Parent involvement starts at home and can be very simple including having a regular schedule, reading at home, supporting study and homework time, expectations for behavior, regular bedtime, healthy meals and quality family life.” An organizational leader stressed that, “A literate society is going to be a more enjoyable and a more reasonable one.”

Successful Transitions 2007

a) List some of the competencies that students should possess when they graduate from high school.

A large majority of respondents indicated that students should be ready for college and/or the workforce and additional training when they graduate from high school. The majority also indicated that effective oral and written communication skills, reading skills and technology skills were essential to transitioning from high school to the next level. About half of the participants stated that life long learning was an important outcome of K-12 education. Quite a few indicated that a work ethic and cognitive thinking skills were indispensable. The participants also said that students should not need to take remedial courses after high school; they should learn new things quickly; possess teamwork skills; have financial literacy skills and have mastered computation skills.

Quotes from the “Successful Transitions” category included expectations and ideals demonstrated by the statement, “Students ought to know what the societal norms

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expected of them are in a variety of contexts.” An employer indicated that, “The students who have social responsibility seem to have all the other pieces; skill, knowledge and motivation.” Another employer indicated that, “High school graduates that are well prepared are much more likely to come from high schools that challenged them and held them to high standards.” Several of the interviewees had comments similar to this one, “High school graduates ought to leave school with the desire to keep learning, knowing that the learning process is an ongoing thing and doesn’t end when you graduate.”

An education leader indicated that, “Students must leave high school with a good work ethic; good study habits translate to good work habits.” An appointed official said, “Students need to understand that when they get out of K-12 schools they are in the school-of-life, which is really the next step of learning.” An organizational leader emphasized that a work ethic be earned during school age years and stated, “That ethic includes ability to follow instructions, think logically, study skills, organizational skills, reliability, civility, teamwork and ability to complete tasks. And, if they start something, finish it.”

Several of those interviewed indicated that in order to advance economic development in Nevada, education needed to make adjustments. One stated, “Southern Nevada is facing a workforce crisis within the next ten years. Number one, there is just a shortage of people to work and number two, there is an under prepared workforce.”

b) How can the Nevada educational system provide a variety of learning environments to allow students to achieve skills and transition students to the next level?

A large majority of those interviewed stated that Career Technical Education options were vital to Nevada’s high schools. The participants stressed that increasing options for
high school students, including competency based coursework and flexibility in time to master competencies, would improve transitions after high school. A preponderance of those interviewed said more career academics and magnet programs would be beneficial. More than half of the participants also stressed that rigor and relevance in coursework are critical to the future success of students. Many stated that career options should be presented as well as alternative school times and an alternative school year calendar. Additionally, respondents desired that students be able to pursue drama, music and art plus more online courses. The group also wanted an expansion of technology and an elimination of the disparity in achievement levels.

The group as a whole expressed frustration with the current system in secondary schools and one of them suggested an innovative practice, “Schools should be offering competency based assessment and getting away from the Carnegie unit seat time. Achievement should be the constant and seat time should be variable.” Another said that more options should be available, “The dual credit courses that are permitted for high school students lend themselves to a college experience for those students who may not even have considered college as an option. If they play the game right, they could almost have an Associate of Arts (AA) degree by the time they graduate from high school.” The term ‘Rigor and Relevance’ (Daggett, et al, 1997) was well known in education circles, but the group of 2007 interviewees suggested that relevance must come before rigor. One of those interviewed stated, “We have to find more opportunities for finding that area of relevance through our students and teach through that means.” Another interviewee indicated, “By teaching education relevance and not just theory, it helps with
what students are trying to learn. It’s relevant education that we don’t have in our broad general curriculum. I think we ought to have more relevance in addition to more rigor.”

One interviewee indicated, “Developing peer guidance, peer counseling, so that you have a set of students at various grades that have demonstrated leadership qualities. They should be the ambassadors for program options such as magnet schools, academies and other options.”

_Equity and Access 2007_

a) How can Nevada better prepare for the increasing diversity in the school population?

More than half of those interviewed indicated that all people should respect diversity, regardless of ethnicity or age. Many indicated that schools should closely monitor progress of diverse and English Language Learner (ELL) students, as well as have high expectations for all students. Others felt that parents should be more involved and that assessments of specific student needs should be made. They also said that decisions about the student should be determined after the needs assessment process was conducted.

Quotes from “Equity and Access” category included, “Education needs to value what everyone brings to the table, whether it’s a language, culture, a thought or an idea.” One interviewer referred to the reading research and stated, “Continue the academic focus on reading for English Language Learners (ELL) students because research confirms that ELL students, who are better readers, perform at higher levels.” One leader stated, “We should make a long-term media commitment to Hispanic parents to encourage the importance of education for their kids and for themselves.”
b) What are some ways to offer multiple teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners in our public schools?

A majority of respondents indicated that educators should know the individual characteristics of students, including their strengths and needs. Half of the participants said that teachers need to understand a variety of cultures; teachers need to be inclusive of diverse populations and to work closely with parents and the community. Others expressed that teachers needed to be from diverse cultures, and the community should value what everyone brings, including culture and language. They also declared that schools should provide a mix of services to diverse students including services such as reduced class sizes. The participants affirmed that schools should foster successful demonstration programs.

Several of those interviewed added advice for educators, “Educators need to be student centered and student friendly, utilizing integrity and honor at all times.” One interviewee captured the sentiments of the group when he stated, “Teachers need to have cultural consciousness, put personal perceptions aside and truly believe that every child can learn.” Another had a similar comment, “We have to change to improve cultural understanding and competency; we need cultural consciousness.”

An interviewee indicated that it is a teacher’s responsibility to know how each student learns by saying, “Teachers need to make an effort to teach to the student’s learning style. Students don’t necessarily match a teacher’s learning style. There needs to be more effort to eliminate disparity.” Another used technology as an example, “There is a digital divide and a resource divide among students of color. Inequities and gaps must be
eliminated.” One interviewee stated, “The one size fits all model doesn’t work, especially with the diversity of the students that we have now.”

Several of those interviewed indicated it was critical to analyze data on the various groups of students. One of them stated, “Teachers need to have a quicker turnaround of the data so the teacher can use the information effectively.” One educator used a model program as an example, “The ‘Calendar of Concepts’ is a schedule of teaching to the education standards. At regular intervals, common assessments are administered to determine the student skill level. Assistance is provided to students who need extra instructional time to master the skills and achieve the grade level with their peers. Students are performing higher on every pretest for skills and concepts.”

Several interviewees indicated that bilingual skills were very important in our society, particularly in the business sector. One leader said, “We need to take advantage of the people who have a second language and change from a society who says, ‘English Only’ to ‘English Plus’. If you have a second language, you should be able to use it, develop it and not be put down because of it.”

Expectations were mentioned frequently in the responses in several categories. One interviewer captured it best by saying, “Principals need to set expectations for their parents and teachers, and teachers for their students. We need students to stretch and expect more of themselves.” One stakeholder declared, “A 12th grader should be reading at 12th grade level. If they’re not, they should be getting help to achieve that level.”
Exceptional People 2007

a) What are ways that Nevada can attract, train and honor exceptional people in order to have an excellent cadre of educators?

Increasing teacher pay was stated by a majority of the participants as a priority for attracting educators to Nevada. Almost half indicated that a passion for teaching was critical. Five said that educators should be honored and respected. Other respondents listed bonuses, or pay differentials in subject areas where there are teacher shortages, as ways to improve education. They said that reducing class sizes, supportive school site administrators, access to mentors and holding teachers to high standards would attract and retain teachers in the profession. A number of the participants also said that pay-for-performance would be an incentive to many educators.

The participant group had many ideas in the “Exceptional People” category. When the participants referred to attracting teachers, one said, “To find outstanding people you must have an incredible recruitment process.” Another said, “Nevada needs bonuses or pay differentials for subject matter specialists in shortage areas such as mathematics, science, Special Education and ELL.” A public official said, “A housing program for new teachers has been initiated to assist them with down payments and low interest loans so that housing can be more affordable for the starting teacher.” One leader stated that, “Fundamental issues need to be addressed such as the cost of housing, transportation issues and quality of life types of things.”

Relative to recruitment and retention of teachers, another said, “We need to fast track people’s ability to become teachers. There are many people out there in the community that could teach one or two classes, or full time, that may have other careers and are
looking for a new profession.” One interviewee indicated that, “There needs to be a stronger student-teacher and teacher-mentor program.”

Several of those interviewed referred to principal leadership. One said, “Administrators need to have an incredible reputation of supporting their teachers and their students.” One interviewee stated, “Successful administrators don’t spend a lot of time outside of their school, stuck in meetings all the time, but are there as a resource to their teachers.”

Empowerment was mentioned in several of the interviews. One stated, “If accountability is going to rest on the principal and the staff, then you have to give them the decision making ability in their school.” Another indicated, “You have to be strong enough to face the criticisms that are true and have the fortitude to exact changes that will address the weaknesses in a very large system, and be patient enough to allow those changes to take hold. Educators have to be resilient when facing the scrutiny that is quite often at the forefront of many people’s minds when it comes to public education.” One stated, “Pay-for-performance lends to the issue of more autonomy for the principals. If the principal is going to be held accountable, then I think the principal should be able to make the judgments necessary.” One indicated that “site based councils” associated with empowerment schools would be beneficial. He stated, “Whether it’s a non-profit, large or small business, most successful organizations have some outside stewarding body and that could apply to schools.”

b) Education is a difficult and challenging career and what skills do you believe educators need to be successful?
Seven participants indicated that subject area content knowledge was the most important factor contributing to success as an educator. Six respondents emphasized that educators should be caring and compassionate; should think inclusively about diversity; should use assessment data to develop curriculum, inform teachers at the classroom level and raise the achievement level of every student. Five stated that recognizing strengths in others was important and that school site administrators need a reputation of supporting teachers. Four stressed that superior technology skills, a repertoire of instructional skills and strategies, developing new methods to assess student learning and leadership skills were essential to the success of educators.

Those interviewed had several noteworthy comments about educators and their skills. Quite a few commented on the ethos of teaching and said, “Educators need to have a passion for teaching.” Another said, “Exceptional people have a passion for what they do.” An additional interviewee felt that teachers must be current in their skill set and stated, “Teachers must have superior technology skills as well as the content skills in their specific subject matter.” Another commented relative to reverence for the profession, “Teachers have so much to do and we should honor and respect that.” One of those interviewed stated that, “There are two parallels, one is knowledge of the field in which you are teaching and the other is to have a mastery of the pedagogy required in the subject area.” One interviewee stated, “Educators should be well read, know the difference between best practices and take on the challenge of exacting change.” One stated that, “Educators should have a certain degree of patience and be solid learners themselves.”
Several of those interviewed addressed time and management concerns, "Teachers spend a significant amount of time in their classrooms preparing the students to learn. Classroom management issues take time away from teaching and learning." Time for teaching was noted by one interviewee, "A longer school day and year are needed to include more teacher time with students as well as collaboration among themselves."

Comments about cultural diversity were echoed throughout the interview process and one stated, "Nevada needs to grow a diverse staff to help achieve and to encourage students from diverse populations to go into education as a career. Scholarships and incentives are needed to advance this concept." One stated that, "Nevada needs to attract and retain a 'brain trust' of people who will work to improve the educational condition of Nevada."

Additional pay and pay incentives were referred to frequently by those interviewed. One stated, "A truly empowered teacher, who knows what the standards are, can be very satisfied with a career in education if there is an incentive pay program which is based on the performance of their students." An interviewee offered, "Quality teachers would be more likely to choose at-risk schools because the incremental progress of students would be greater in those schools." Another said, "A merit pay system for teachers would definitely change the performance of most teachers." One indicated, "Because of the poor pay scale and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the perception of society about education is that people from the more mediocre category gravitate toward education." An additional comment was, "The method of rating schools discourages teachers from staying in at-risk schools. Teachers don’t want their peers to think they work at an inadequate school."
One participant reflected on personal experience by saying, “There isn’t a person that
doesn’t recall their best teachers. They often mention people who they didn’t like at the
time, who were too hard and too demanding, but for the most part they were people who
knew what they were talking about and they were involved and helped you grow. They
helped you by building your own knowledge base and your confidence.”

A final quote from an interviewee reflected the general tone of those interviewed,
“Whether is comes from parents or business, we need the commitment that we want
education to succeed.”

Comments by some of the respondents did not fit into the four major categories but
were included because multiple interviewers voiced the same ideas. For example, four
participants stated that affordable housing for teachers and principal autonomy in schools
were priorities. Three participants indicated that the state needed to make a commitment
to improve education and best practices should be replicated wherever possible. Two of
those interviewed stated that choices and options were very important to Nevada’s
education system and that the public should support, rather than bash, public education.

Statistical Analysis of Research Questions

The data was further analyzed by groupings to determine if there were significant
differences in the priority responses by category. The groupings of the interviewees were
business representatives, educators, elected officials, appointed officials and
organizational representatives. The Categorical Response Trends (Appendix IV)
indicated the priority responses in each topical area. The groups had many similar
responses to the questions overall. Even though some groups did not respond in every
category it may have been a result of limited time or they did not focus on a particular aspect of education in the interview.

There were several deviations in the “Ready to Learn” category. For example, the organizational leaders did not mention specific content skills in their responses. Also, the educators did not mention self-responsibility for young children in their responses. Neither the elected nor appointed officials mentioned social skills as important characteristics for young children.

In the “Successful Transitions” area, there was consensus on many of the responses. Two areas of slight divergence were 1) elected officials did not specifically mention cognitive thinking skills, nor did 2) educators mention rigor and relevance in coursework.

The “Equity and Access” category produced additional harmonious responses with the exception of the appointed officials who did not mention that education should closely monitor the progress of diverse and ELL students. Elected officials and organizational leaders did not exclusively state that teachers need to be from diverse populations.

The “Exceptional People” responses provided the most divergent views relative to teacher pay. All of the categories brought up increased pay for educators. Everyone, except educators, stated that pay differentials were needed in subject areas with shortages such as math, science and special education. Pay-for-performance was highly recommended by business and association leaders, but not educators. Elected officials did not comment on caring and compassionate teachers and thinking inclusively about diversity. Also, appointed officials did not specifically point out raising achievement for every student.
The differences were very subtle overall, except in the area of teacher pay, where there was consensus that a pay increase was needed. Business representatives, elected officials, appointed officials and organizational leaders indicated that pay differentials and pay-for-performance were needed in the education system. Educators wanted an overall pay increase.

Over the three year period between the Needs Assessment Processes, the researcher observed that the participants increased their knowledge and sophistication relative to the Nevada education system. Each of those interviewed in 2007 had a passion for improving the quality of life in our state. This was demonstrated by their commitment to service in multiple facets of our culture, as employers, employees, parents, volunteers or elected or appointed officials. This observation was also evidenced by the content and intensity of their comments.

Chapter Summary

The research question involved a case study which resulted from analyzing both the 2004 and 2007 interview processes and results. The data from each year was evaluated and conclusions were reported.

The four major themes that resulted from the 2004 needs assessment interview endeavor indicated that “Ready to Learn”, “Successful Transitions”, “Exceptional People”, and “Equity and Access” were the priorities and major areas where improvement was needed in the educational system.

The 2004 interviews raised additional questions that led to the follow-up study in 2007 because the issues that were raised in 2004 continued to be priorities in 2007 across
the educational system in Nevada. Additional information from key stakeholders selected for the interview process was gathered relative to the current and future condition of the education system. The results of an analysis of the 2004 interviews indicated that the major focus areas were needs in the education system. The 2007 interviews revealed additional perspectives on those needs, taking education to the next level. All of those interviewed had views relative to the expectations, ideals, model programs and innovations for Nevada's education system.

An analysis of the matched groups of interviewees was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the priority responses by category. The groupings of the interviewees were business representatives, educators, elected officials, appointed officials and organizational representatives. The differences in the responses were very subtle overall, except in the area of "Exceptional People" which relate to teacher pay. There was consensus that a pay increase was needed. There were differing opinions about pay differentials and pay-for-performance in the education system. The educator group indicated that increased teacher pay for everyone was essential, while the business representatives, elected officials, appointed officials and organizational representatives indicated that a pay differential or pay-for-performance system was needed.

Nevadans overall were concerned about the future of education in their state. A historical review of society and the literature review in Chapter Two revealed that the issue of improving education is timeless. The importance of providing a good education for the youth of a society was noted by Aristotle over two thousand years ago: "All who have mediated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends up the education of youth."
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study conducted in 2007 further ascertained the perceptions of business, political and education representatives relative to the education needs in Nevada. The 2007 research followed up a Statewide Needs Assessment Process conducted in 2004 by the Nevada Public Education Foundation (NPEF), a statewide, nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization. The research performed in 2007 was a follow-up with interviews carried out with selected representatives, the majority of whom participated in 2004. The results from the research in 2007 updated and expanded what was gleaned from the Statewide Needs Assessment Process in 2004.

A descriptive case study approach was used as a research method to evaluate the perceptions of business members, politicians and educators who were interviewed in the process. The questions from the 2004 interview results were expanded in 2007 to delve further into the opinions and perspectives of the interviewees, who were representative of the business, political and education sectors. After a thorough review of the interview results, minutes of Foundation meetings and other artifacts, new questions were developed for the 2007 process to further investigate opinions from the Nevada stakeholders on the education system in the state.
The design of the new questions for the 2007 interviews included a rationale for the selection of specific questions for the interview process. The method also indicated how the data would be collected in order to preserve the integrity of the reviewer's comments as well as how the data was analyzed, coded and categorized to determine major issues that surfaced from the interviews. Other important considerations by the researcher were the political implications of the needs assessment process and the ways in which the study was restricted.

Discussion of Results

The research questions that guided this study were:

1) What were the perceptions of leaders across education, business, community and political arenas regarding the educational needs of children and students in the State of Nevada?

2) How have the perceptions of education, business, community and political leaders changed from the 2004 study and the 2007 study?

The responses to the first question were summarized by major themes that surfaced in the 2007 study. Each matched group was analyzed for overall similarities and differences. The major themes were linked to the literature review to connect the results with the prior research. Most noteworthy was the report by the West Ed Center on Policy collaborated with the Center for Education Policy Studies (CEPS) at UNLV (2005) to address important education policy matters necessary for assisting school improvement in Nevada. The four priority needs stated in the Statewide Needs Assessment Process correlated closely with the recommendations in the West Ed Report. The crosswalk
between the two reports indicated that the need areas were almost identical: 1) 
"Exceptional People" - teacher preparation and professional development, 2) "Ready to 
Learn" - early childhood, 3) "Transitions" - high school initiative and 4) "Equity and 
Access" - improve achievement and reduce the gaps (p.26).

Another recent report, *Tough Choices, Tough Times* (2007), developed 
recommendations that closely correlated to the 2007 research on the Needs Assessment 
Process. Four of the ten steps were similar to the 2007 study: 1) schools should develop 
standards, assessments, and curriculum that reflect today's needs and tomorrow’s 
requirements aligned with "Successful Transitions"; 2) provide high quality, universal 
early childhood education resembles the "Ready to Learn" topic; 3) recruit from the top 
third of the high school graduates going on to college for the next generation of school 
teachers matches the "Exceptional People" issue; and 4) "Equity and Access" was 
supported by the statement, "give strong support to the students who need it the most" 
(pp.9-20).

The major findings from the 2007 interviews are listed by area and by general 
responses within the respective category.

*Ready to Learn 2007*

The early childhood skills that children should possess in order to transition to 
Kindergarten were readiness for school; social skills; communication and language 
development; and the ability to follow rules, directions and have self discipline.

Parents and the community should adequately prepare and encourage children so they 
are ready for school grades K-12. The community ought to provide services and support 
which encourage improved parenting. Schools should be parent friendly, and parents
should provide multiple socialization opportunities for their children including reading to them. The Harwood Study (2004) conducted in southern Nevada indicated that lack of home support was identified as contributing to Nevada's low graduation rates and that Nevada had low social capital because the community shuns the burden of supporting public education as it should.

The characteristics of parent involvement that were critical to the success and readiness of children for grades K-12 were parent involvement; parental encouragement of communication; and parent education and training. Ballen, Casey and Kanter (1998) concluded, “Parents should be involved in their children’s education in school, at home and in the community” (p.10).

Successful Transitions 2007

Students should possess the following skills when they graduate from high school; they should be ready for work and/or college, and possess effective communication, computation and technology skills. Clark (1992) indicated that businesses were motivated to assist schools with producing better prepared students for the future workforce and they joined educators to accomplish these mutual goals.

The Nevada educational system should provide a variety of learning environments to allow students to achieve skills and transition to the next level such as Career Technical Education (CTE); increased options and flexibility such as competency based requirements, rather than seat time; dual credits; career academics; and magnet schools. Furthermore, additional relevance and rigor are needed in the coursework. Brown (1999) determined that education should, “Better prepare all people to participate and be productive, responsible citizens and community members, which can occur only by
eliminating barriers that prevent diverse groups from gaining access to such
opportunities; educate future leaders as to how the system must change to be more
inclusive, enabling all individuals to fulfill their career potential; and initiate a program
that will help to integrate the skills and information needed to pursue ‘authentic’ learning,
learning that is relevant to real life and that has meaning to the learner” (p. 2).

*Equity and Access 2007*

The participants stated that Nevada could better prepare for the increasing diversity in
the school population by utilizing strategies such as greater cultural competency in our
increasingly diverse population; closely monitoring the progress of diverse and ELL
students; and setting high expectations for all students. Beth Buehlmann, Vice President
and Executive Director of the Center for Workforce Preparation (2004) addressed the
partnership issues when she stated, "What is required is a nationwide commitment by
government, businesses, and communities to provide all students with rigorous and
challenging academic preparation" (p.13).

Ways to offer multiple teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners in our
public schools were suggested. They included recognizing the individual characteristics
of students and possessing high levels of cultural consciousness. Several participants felt
that educators should be from more diverse cultures. Additionally, it was recommended
that the system should provide a mix of services, including reduced class size and best
practices.

Nieto (2000) provided a framework of structural and organizational issues that could
be useful to Nevada. The list of issues advised an examination of tracking, testing, the
curriculum, pedagogy, physical structure, disciplinary policies, limited role of students,
limited role of teachers and limited family and community involvement within schools. Nieto suggested that if multicultural education were inclusive it would: 1) Raise the achievement of all students and provide them with an equitable and high quality education, and 2) give students an apprenticeship in the opportunity to become critical and productive members of a democratic society (p. 9).

Another researcher, Banks (1997), indicated that students from diverse cultures should learn the fundamentals of reading, writing and computing. Additionally, Banks stated, “Helping students to become reflective and active citizens of a public, democratic society is at the essence of our conception of equity pedagogy” (p. 79).

Exceptional People 2007

There were suggestions from the participants for ways that Nevada can better attract, train and honor exceptional people in order to have an excellent cadre of educators. The strategies suggested were to increase compensation for educators; to seek people who possess a passion for teaching; and to honor and respect those in the profession.

Participants suggested that educators needed specific skills in order to be successful. Being knowledgeable and competent about their subject areas; being caring and compassionate; using assessment data to inform instruction; and raising the achievement level of every student were critical to a teacher’s success. The Harwood Study (2004) suggested that substandard training of teachers was highlighted as a key area that needed improving. The Corporate Imperative was analyzed by Ballen, Casey and Kanter (1998) and one of their findings stated, “Classrooms should be connected to the internet and all teachers should be well trained in using technology” (p. 9).
Kabota (1993) indicated, “Partnerships with business and the community could expose teachers to new technology, give teachers authentic work with real world problems in laboratories or businesses, provide teachers opportunities to interact with scientists and other technical trained professionals and assist teachers in transferring work experience into classrooms” (p.3).

The NAPE *Partnerships 2000: A Decade of Growth* report defined the “next steps” in collaborative development between business and schools: Major areas of education reform were included in these relations according to the survey: student achievement, technology, school to work, school readiness, family literacy, community involvement, school safety, professional development and systemic change. Many of those listed in the Partnerships 2000 report correlated with the major themes from the 2007 Needs Assessment Process.

Hood and Rubin (2004) indicated that business and community should focus on providing assistance to schools in four areas: 1) enhanced student learning, 2) extended teacher capacity, 3) increased innovation in school systems and 4) more effective assessment tools.

As the researcher reviewed the 2007 data that was gathered through the responses, it became apparent that there were slightly more responses in the topical areas of “Ready to Learn” and “Successful Transitions”. The interviewees tended to put more emphasis on the entry level skills in “Ready to Learn”, as well as the exit skills in “Successful Transitions”. These two categories each received 30 percent of the responses which were higher than the responses in the other two areas. “Exceptional People” and “Equity and Access” each received approximately 20 percent of the responses. The weighting
percentages were established by taking the total number of responses to the questions and dividing by the number of participants in order to obtain a percent for each theme. The model in Figure One illustrates the two priority areas that surfaced in the interviews.

Overall, there was general consensus among the interviewees as to the needs of the system. The differences were subtle overall, except in the area of teacher pay, where there was consensus that a pay increase was needed. Business people, elected officials, appointed officials and organizational leaders recommended that increased pay should be in the shape of pay differentials and pay-for-performance, while educators preferred that a general pay increase was needed throughout the entire education system.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

What distinguished the 2007 Needs Assessment process, apart from the 2004 process, was the informed perspective of those interviewed. Every interviewee, regardless of the sector they represented, possessed a broad knowledge of the education system in Nevada. Furthermore, they knew their own limitations. If the interviewee did not have specific information in a category, they indicated that to the researcher, and the interview moved forward to an area where they did have more information and knowledge. The Nevadans who participated in the study care deeply about the quality of their education system. They are concerned that not enough human capital is being prepared for the 21st century workforce. Many of them added that education cannot be confined to the school house, but must be spread out over a lifetime of learning.

An analysis of the 2004 interviews indicated the major focus areas were educational needs in the system, while the 2007 interviews revealed additional perspectives, and took
Figure 2

Model of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2004 and 2007 responses</th>
<th>2007 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Innovations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

education needs to the next level. Many of those interviewed had views about the expectations, ideals, model programs and innovations for Nevada’s education system.
While the participants agreed that expectations should be high for all students, the ideal belief was exemplified in cultural consciousness for all and model programs such as "Kinder Amigas" were recommended. Another suggested innovation had merit relative to teacher recruitment. A participant stated, "Nevada needs to grow and encourage current students, especially diverse students, to be future educators." There were several programs underway mentioned by the participants that may need expansion such as the University of Nevada, Reno, Dean’s Future Scholars Program; the Teacher Education Academy (TEACH) program at Clark High School and the Student to Teacher Enlistment Program Undergraduate Program (STEP UP) program in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Overall, the participants in the 2007 study recognized an urgent need for more changes in the education program. They also had a heightened awareness of the Nevada education system, and identified more specificity in the needs of the system. The expansion of the participants’ perspectives was demonstrated in Figure Two.

A common vision for the future was needed. Nevada’s vision for education should be expanded to include the insights revealed in both the 2004 and 2007 needs assessment processes. Based on the responses and the analysis, the researcher recommended a comprehensive vision to encompass the following features.

*Ready for Life*

Increased cooperation among a variety of community stakeholders and partners to improve readiness of children, preKindergarten, Kindergarten and parent involvement was recommended. All children should have access to early childhood education in order to be prepared for entry into the K-12 education system. Students needed to master and exceed, if possible, the proficiencies at each grade level in order to achieve personal and
social literacy that will enable them to succeed in every grade level and become lifelong learners. The community at large needed to make a commitment to assist in bringing all learners to grade level and beyond. Programs that extend the school day and year, as well as virtual and distance education, ought to be provided where possible. Parents needed to improve their own learning, raise their awareness of their child’s educational needs and become involved as well as engaged with their child’s schooling.

Successful Transitions

Career development through Career Technical Education, academies and magnet schools was needed, particularly for secondary school students, to insure better transition to the next levels. Students needed to master the “21st Century Skills” such as those required for a college preparatory curriculum or “Gateway Curriculum.” They should possess skills such as those defined by Daggett (2007) which included core learning, stretch learning, student engagement and personal skill development. The Nevada community, additionally, needed to provide expanded opportunities for school partnerships to increase mentoring, internships, resources and community understanding of the needs of schools.

Connectivity through the use of technology would assist with education options, parent involvement and the evaluation of student achievement and options. Innovation and creativity were needed to match the student’s technological interest and aptitude. Technology afforded new ways to communicate with parents through systems such as “Intouch” and “Edline”. Through technology, programs were available to individualize academic plans and lessons, as well as measure student progress.
Continual and lifelong learning was recommended for everyone. Persistent education has been shown to improve quality of life and increase one's life span.

Equity and Access

Cultural consciousness needed to expand in the Nevada education system because of the changing demographics of the state. Educators needed to increase their 1) understanding of the characteristics of new students, and 2) identification of the specific educational needs of pupils and their families. Action needed to be taken to provide diversity education in the administrative leadership programs for masters and doctoral candidates in Nevada's universities as well as ongoing multicultural training for education leaders. At the school site, student characteristics and individual needs should be analyzed, and an intervention system should be provided based on whether the pupils are English Language Learners, Special Education, Gifted or Talented or students with other classifications.

Communication was needed regarding successful programs and schools with all stakeholders in the system. The state and school districts needed to recognize programs that were successful in both the teaching and learning process. Programs that had exemplary characteristics and successes needed to be recognized, celebrated and communicated to the media.

Nevada needed a commitment to high expectations for all students. Nevada educators needed to understand more about how students learn, and then teach students using appropriate strategies. Rigor was increased when students became engaged and found relevance in their education. To prepare students for a global economy a superior effort should to be expected during their formal schooling experience.
Collaboration was desired to improve opportunities for empowerment schools and local decision making. Site based decision making needed to be explored and pilot programs were launched in the Clark County School District to pursue the potential of empowerment methods of school governance. The pilot programs needed to be examined for efficacy and promising practices.

*Exceptional People*

Nevada needed to construct a comprehensive system for the preparation, induction, professional development and compensation of teachers. Nevada required expansion of the research based, professional development opportunities; and needed to work toward sustained training opportunities at the school site level. Examples such as Professional Learning Communities provided promise of continual improvement for educators and schools. Teachers needed to be involved in decisions about students learning and progress. Those involved in the decision making process relative to schools should to be those closest to the learner, such as the site administrators, site educators and parents.

An additional recommendation of the researcher suggested a periodic follow-up study to continually ascertain the perceptions of stakeholders in the Nevada education system. Because of Nevada’s dramatic growth and projected increase in student population and diversity, ongoing analysis was necessary to assess the multiple needs that would contribute to the improvement of the state’s education structure and delivery. Nevada should investigate the possibility of long term forecasting, such as a ten year strategic plan, rather than the two year model that exists today. Continual study of the education system would also reduce perceptional gaps within the constituent community.
Consistent and relevant data to drive improvement and to evaluate progress was considered critical to the ongoing analysis and enhancement of the education system. Research based strategies to improve performance and reduce achievement gaps were predicted to be ongoing needs in the education system in Nevada. Data driven decision making was considered key to increasing student achievement.

Nevada should be relentless about changing the culture of education by producing a more educated population. The Nevada frontier has evolved into a rapidly growing and diverse state. Nevada should pursue a course for improved education to ensure future economic development and prosperity. Nevada needs to heed the advice of Cecil John Rhodes when he wrote in 1902, “Education relations make the strongest tie, so little done – so much to do.”
APPENDIX I SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS AND ARTIFACTS
## Major categories of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of responses</th>
<th>Transitions</th>
<th>Ready to Learn and Parent Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equity and Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educational and Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major categories</th>
<th>Successful Transitions</th>
<th>Ready to Learn</th>
<th>Equity and Access People</th>
<th>Exceptional and Innovative Programs Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<p>| Summary of interviews | All students achieve maximize deserve system help proficiency the benefits equitable attracts trains student and of the public access to a and honors become experience education quality exceptional ready to successful system by education people learn, transitions achieving through proper effective foundation learning skills. environments and planning |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major categories of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area of responses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major categories</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

(continued)

people, we must develop and support innovative practices and solutions.
APPENDIX II PRIORITIES OF THE 2004 STAKEHOLDER GROUPS
### Stakeholders Responses in Interview Categories 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>EO</th>
<th>KA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready to Learn</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Categories codes:

P - Parents representing low, middle and high income levels and multiple cultures.

B - Business representing small and large businesses

E - Educators representing classrooms teachers, counselors and other staff

EL - Education Leadership representing superintendents, principals, higher education and directors.

EO - Elected Officials representing Nevada Senate, Board of Regents, State Board of Education, local school boards
KA - Key Associations representing chambers of commerce, education associations, manufacturing, resort, NAACP, Hispanic services, and Nevada PTA.
APPENDIX III INFORMED CONSENT AND PARTICIPANT DOCUMENTS
Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study is to ascertain the business, education and community perceptions regarding the needs of the educational system in Nevada. The research will consist of a follow-up study to be conducted in 2007. The researcher is attempting to determine if perspectives or opinions about education in Nevada have changed since a similar needs assessment process was conducted in 2004.

Participants
Participants in the 2007 study were selected so that they had similar characteristics to those who were interviewed in the Nevada Statewide Needs Assessment Process in 2004. The major stakeholder groups for the 2007 study were chosen to represent Nevada’s interest in the education system such as business members, key association leaders, parents, educators and education leaders. Two to three influential individuals from each group have been selected to participate. Each interviewee will receive a telephone call and written invitation to participate followed by a letter outlining the interview process, the UNLV Informed Consent document and the date, time and place of the interview.

Procedures
Volunteers who participate in the study will be asked to meet with the graduate student for an interview of 45 minutes to 1 hour and respond to ten questions related to education needs in Nevada during the interview. The interview will be recorded if the interviewee agrees to the tape recorded interview process.

Benefits of Participation
There may not be direct benefits to the participants in this study. However, the researcher hopes to learn if opinions and priorities relative to Nevada’s education needs are the same or if they have changed since 2004.
Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. The interviewee may become uncomfortable when answering some questions. The interviewee may not have all the information available to answer the questions completely. A follow-up telephone conversation will be conducted if interviewees feel they need to gather additional information.

Cost /Compensation
There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study; however there will be a cost in terms of time. Participation in this study will take 45 minutes to 1 hour of your time. You will not be compensated for your time. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas may not provide compensation or free medical care for an unanticipated injury sustained as a result of participating in this research study.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact James Crawford at 702-283-7913 or Charlotte Curtis at 775-687-9243. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702-895-2794.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV College of Education Room 321 for at least 3 years after completion of the study.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_________________________  __________________
Signature of Participant     Date

_________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)
Consent to Audiotape:

I consent that the interview may be audio taped:

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date __________

Participant Note: Please do not sign this document if the Approval Stamp is missing or is expired.

Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review Approval Notice from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects approved on January 25, 2007 and expires on January 24, 2008 by Dr. J. Michael Stitt, Chair, Protocol #: 0611-2179
A statewide needs assessment process was conducted to determine opinions and perceptions about Nevada education. The needs assessment utilized a personal interview process with a nationally known consultant, J.D. Hoye, Keep the Change, Inc. Individuals interviewed represented three major groups: business, educators and community members. Fifty-seven Nevadans were interviewed from both urban and rural areas of the state.

Four questions were asked of each individual:

- What do you believe is the most pressing need in the educational system in Nevada?
- What outcomes/results do you believe best measure educational success?
- What role should employers play in providing educational opportunities for students?
- How would you describe the political landscape in relation to support for education in Nevada?

The opinions and perceptions that emerged across all groups interviewed were:

- Addressing the drop-out problem is critical, and beginning the focus in high school is too late.
- Preparation for college and careers should have equal standing in the educational system.
- Parental involvement must be part of any strategy to improve student achievement.
- Ensuring that teachers are adequately trained must be a priority.
- Honestly reviewing student performance data by race and socio-economic factors is important.
- Building strong, positive relationships between schools and the community must happen before sharing the responsibility for children can be possible.
- Work opportunities for young people are important, but employers must encourage education at the same time.

All of the input and recommendations fell into one of these four broad areas of focus:

- Ready to Learn
- Successful Transitions
- Equity and Access
- Exceptional People
Questions for Interviews 2007

Community and Education Perceptions Regarding Education Needs in Nevada

1) The topic of “Ready to Learn” was extended to ask the following questions.

   a) What are the early childhood skills that children should possess in order to transition to Kindergarten?
   b) How can parents and the community adequately prepare and encourage children so they are ready for school grades K-12?
   c) Describe the characteristics of parent involvement that are critical to the success and readiness of children grades K-12?

2) “Successful Transitions” questions were broadened to ask more in depth questions.

   a) Name some of the skills that students should possess when they graduate from high school.
   b) How can the Nevada educational system provide a variety of learning environments to allow students to achieve skills and transition students to the next level?

3) The category “Equity and Access” rendered additional questions related to Nevada’s changing population.

   a) How can Nevada better prepare for the increasing diversity in the school population?
   b) What are some ways to offer multiple teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners in our public schools?

4) The subject of “Exceptional People” emphasized the necessity of attracting and training quality educators for the schools in the state.

   a) What are ways that Nevada can attract, train and honor exceptional people in order to have an excellent cadre of educators?
   b) Education is a difficult and challenging career and what skills do you believe educators need to be successful?
Date

Name and address

Dear Participant:

I am writing to request an interview with you as part of a follow-up process on a statewide needs assessment project that was conducted in 2004 by the Nevada Public Education Foundation. Information from the interview will be used to determine how perceptions and opinions have changed or stayed constant over the past several years. I am currently a graduate student in the UNLV College of Education Executive Doctoral Program and the results will be analyzed and incorporated into a doctoral dissertation.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour. It is desirable for the interview to be conducted in an office environment so that the interview may be taped for transcribing and analysis purposes.

Questions that will be asked during the interview relate to the education needs in Nevada. The questions will relate to the major themes that surfaced in 2004:

1) Ready to Learn - Learners maximize the benefits of the public education system by achieving proper foundation skills.
2) Successful Transitions - Preparation for college and careers should have equal standing in the educational system.
3) Equity and Access - All students deserve equitable access to a quality education.
4) Exceptional People - An education system attracts trains and honors exceptional people.

I will be calling you to arrange an interview date and time that is suitable for you and your busy schedule.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Curtis
UNLV College of Education
Doctoral student
Date

Name and address

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to an interview on __________ at ______. I will be interviewing you as part of a follow-up process on a statewide needs assessment process that was conducted in 2004 by the Nevada Public Education Foundation. Information from these interviews will be used to determine how perceptions and opinions have changed or stayed constant over the past several years.

The interview will take 45 minutes to one hour. It is preferable for the interview to be conducted in an office environment so that the interview may be taped for transcribing and analysis purposes.

Questions that will be asked during the interview relate to the current education needs in Nevada. The 2007 questions will relate to the major themes that surfaced in 2004: 1) Ready to Learn, 2) Successful Transitions, 3) Equity and Access and 4) Exceptional People.

Enclosed are three documents for reference prior to the interview: 1) questions for the interviews 2007; 2) a final summary report 2004; and 3) the UNLV Institutional Review Board Approval (two signatures will be needed on page 3 which I can pick up at the time of the interview or you may fax back to 775-831-7321).

If your schedule changes please call me at the office 775-687-9243, cell 775-771-3863 or email ccurtis@doe.nv.gov.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Curtis
UNLV College of Education
Doctoral student

Enclosures:
UNLV Informed Consent Form
Summary of 2004 Needs Assessment Process
Questions for Interviews 2007
APPENDIX IV CATEGORICAL RESPONSE TRENDS 2007
# Categorical Response Trends 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Questions</th>
<th>Categories of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority Responses</strong></td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ready to Learn</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood skills:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content readiness skills such ABCs, counting to ten and colors</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and language skills</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow directions and rules</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self discipline and responsibility</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent and the community:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and support for parents</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent friendly schools</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide social opportunities for children</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community should emphasize the importance of reading</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent involvement:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in children’s lives</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in what children are doing</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate with children in activities</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage communication</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Questions</th>
<th>Categories of respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority Responses</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready to Learn (continued)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive education and training</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read to their children</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach children how to interact with others</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a stable environment, structure and routine</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful Transitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencies and skills:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for college</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for the workforce and/or training</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective oral and written communication</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading skill</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient in technology</td>
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<td>Life long learning</td>
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<td>Work ethic</td>
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<td>Cognitive thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variety of learning environments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Technical Education (CTE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in options</td>
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<td>Career academies/magnet programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Categories of Questions</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Priority Responses</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Successful Transitions (continued)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rigor and relevance in course work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity and Access</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing diversity:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>High expectations for all students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closely monitor progress of diverse and ELL students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple teaching and learning strategies:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Know individual characteristics of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers need to be inclusive of diverse populations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture competency and understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work closely with parents and the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers need to be diverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value what everyone brings including culture and language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exceptional People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best attract, train and honor educators:</td>
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## Categorical Response Trends 2007

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<th>Categories of Questions</th>
<th>Priority Responses</th>
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<th>E</th>
<th>EO</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exceptional People (continued)</td>
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<td>Increase compensation for educators</td>
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<td>Passion for teaching</td>
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<td>Teachers need honor and respect</td>
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<td>Pay differentials for shortages in core subject areas, Special Education and ELL</td>
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<td>Pay-for-performance</td>
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<td>Skills that teachers need:</td>
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<td>Content knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exceptional People (continued)</td>
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<td>Caring and compassionate</td>
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<td>Think inclusively about diversity</td>
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<td>Use assessment date to instruct and inform teaching</td>
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<td>Raise achievement data of every student</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Categories of respondents: B – Business, E – Educators, EO – Elected Officials, AO – Appointed Officials and OL - Organizational Leaders
REFERENCES


Brown, B.L. (1999). Corporate/School Partnerships: Learner Centered or Business Centered, ERIC Myths and Realities No. 5.


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Dissertation Examination Committee:
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Committee Member, Dr. James Hager, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Porter Troutman, Ph. D.