

E D U C A T I O N

Education forum raps bill's pros and cons
Senate Bill 482 stresses accountability from school district

By Sandra-Dee Fleming
 Special to Sentinel-Voice

Increased accountability. Legislators, educators and school officials rapped the pros and cons of a Senate Bill which is expected to stress more accountability in educating the state's children.

But what drew the ire of educators and parents at the Dec. 9 meeting at Charles I. West Middle School was not the tougher standards, but the accountability.

"I have heard rumors stating if a school is labeled inadequate the state will take over the school. That is not true," said Keith Rheault, Deputy Superintendent for the Nevada Department of Education.

Rheault was referring to Senate Bill 482, which will designate school high- or low-achieving given their test scores, attendance and other factors. Many parents feel an inadequate label will sap their power and the power of teachers to make change.

"If a school is inadequate, then the school and the Department of Education, working together, will look at a number of things and ways to make the school better. Educators from the school will only be removed if the school continues on the inadequate list



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Assemblywoman Christina Guinchigliani, District 9, speaks at a forum addressing legislation aimed at increasing accountability in schools. Education Chairman Wendell Williams and School Board Trustee Shirley Barber convened to forum.

for three years and only after being recommended by a nine-member panel."

The bulk of the schools in the state, Rheault said, will fall into the adequate achieving school category. For those schools labeled inadequate, he said \$3 million in remediation funds will be set aside to help them get back on academic track.

Senate Bill 482, also known as the Nevada Education Reform Act of 1997, seeks to implement statewide academic standards in core subjects; link statewide tests to those

standards; hold schools accountable for performance, as measured by improved statewide accountability reports; establish a process for individual student remediation and school improvement, and; provide legislative review of the entire process.

A nine-member commission has until Sept. 1 to review and establish performance standards for English, to include reading and writing; math and science. Along with the standards, the commission is expected to produce assessments by Nov.

1 to be submitted to the Board of Education.

In August 1999, the standards for art, computer education, health and physical education are expected to be established with subsequent assessments ready for submittal by Nov. 1 of that year.

If approved, these standards will then take effect in the 1999-2000 school year.

"In schools we have to learn (See Bill 482, Page 15)

Book details successes of at-risk youth

Special to Sentinel-Voice

"If we can make it, you can too!" That's the message from more than 100 at-risk youth across the nation who have beaten the odds to get an education, obtain and retain jobs and enter college.

Their stories are told in the new book, "The Young Adult's Guide to 'Making It,'" written by Ed DeJesus.

DeJesus, 33, has spent 13 years working with at-risk youth in the toughest sections of New York City.

He also works in Washington, D.C., where he is the President of the Youth Development and Research Fund, an organization whose mission is to help young adults develop options beyond the streets.

"Every youth in America — absolutely every one — should read this inspiring and instructive book," said Mario Hamblin, executive director of the Newark Youth Leadership Program.

"It is a valuable tool to youth and adults alike. The voices of the at-risk youth used in 'The Guide' gives hope and inspiration for future generations."

DeJesus, born and raised in the Bronx, N.Y., received his

bachelor's degree from Fordham University and a master's degree from the New School for Social Research.

He completed a one-year fellowship at Rutgers University's Center for Strategic Urban Community Leadership.

He is currently a W. K. Kellogg Foundation fellow and has traveled to Brazil, Israel, the Cape Verde Islands, Central America and South Africa to speak with young people about their lives.

A report released last week by the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives found that 50 percent of all Washington, D.C. men ages 18-35 are under control of the criminal justice system.

Twenty percent of the America's 40.9 million young adults aged 14-24 are at-risk, DeJesus said. He warned "that is only part of the story."

"How many are unemployed, underemployed? How many are absent fathers? How many are using drugs?" he asked. "We don't need a report to tell us there is a problem. We need a report to tell us there is a solution."

"The Guide" is part of that solution. The government has

never ever made investments in youth proportionate to the problem. We must help young adults realize that they must do it for themselves, by themselves," he said.

The book taps on the most overlooked resource in searching for answers to how at-risk youth succeed, the youth themselves. In spite of economic hardship, problems in school, limited education and work experience, criminal backgrounds, poor job skills and few professional contacts, thousands of at-risk young adults "make it."

Successful youth are wonderful learning tools. Moreover, their voices can motivate other youth to succeed.

Teachers, counselors, parents and other concerned adults have found "Making It" extremely helpful. It emphasizes the importance of making a connection to a supportive developmental environment where young adults are supported and encouraged to excel.

"This book should be mandatory reading for all young people," said Judge Edward R. Redd of the Massachusetts Trial Court, Roxbury Division.

Education Today

By Teresa Thorne

Safeguard educational standards

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Recently, a public school in the Greenwich Village area of New York City announced it would have to lay off a teacher because of a budget crunch. With the teacher gone, her students would have to be redistributed among the other classes, raising the number of students per class.

Up to that point, the school was considered one of the best in the city, with high reading, math and English scores. One of the reasons the students performed so well was that class size was relatively small compared to more over-crowded districts, and teachers had time to give individual attention to youngsters who needed more help with their studies.

The rejection was appealed and, fortunately, wiser heads came to different decision.

The lesson the Board had to learn was that the only important consideration was to safeguard the school's high educational standards. The Greenwich Village parents were willing to make a financial commitment to that end.

Eventually, the problem of equality in school funding will have to be solved by changing the way school taxes are raised and distributed. We've discussed this in previous columns. If you have ideas on the subject, please send them to us.

On another topic, how would you like your youngsters to study sign language? Sign language is already taught in many schools in Europe, starting in kindergarten. The idea is not just to teach children to be fluent in another language (which is what "sign" actually is), but to teach them how to include all kinds of people in their lives.

Final Note: There's a black educational "authority" who says the reason more black youngsters don't perform as well in school as other groups is that the system fails to appreciate the special needs of black youngsters. This is not only tripe, it perpetuates an insulting racial stereotype.

WHEN FIRST SECURITY BANK ASKED THIS SMALL BUSINESS OWNER WHAT SHE APPRECIATES, WE WEREN'T SURPRISED WHEN SHE SAID

"convenience."

First Security offers full service banking — with a variety of products designed to make running a small business more rewarding and more convenient.

- QUICK TURN-AROUND ON ALL SMALL BUSINESS LOANS.
- ANSWERS TO LOAN REQUESTS UNDER \$100,000 IN LESS THAN 24-HOURS IN MOST CASES.
- EASY APPLICATION FORMS

Stop by any First Security branch, or call 251-1100. We'll help you customize a plan that addresses your individual needs.



ASK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES:

- REVOLVING LINE OF CREDIT
- TERM LOANS
- REAL ESTATE LOANS (BUSINESS)
- VEHICLE LOANS
- BUSINESS CHECKING
- CORPORATE SAVINGS ACCOUNTS
- EXECUTIVE BANKING SERVICES
- EQUIPMENT LEASING
- INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT
- COMPANY RETIREMENT PLANS

