

February 2014

The “State” of Washoe County School District – Performing Well!

EDAWN recently commissioned the Buckley Education Group, Inc., to do a data analysis of the Washoe County School District as it compared to the 50 states. The objective was to determine how the district ranked (if it were a state) to the other 50 states in several key areas. The results of the report were enlightening and in line with feedback that EDAWN has received from many of our existing and new employers.

In short, the quality of the graduates here is very good. The report evaluated several criteria and in performance, WCSD ranked better than many states that have an excellent national reputation for education.

The report, dated December 2013, showed that the district excelled in several areas:

“College Readiness in all Subjects” WCSD ranks 18th in the Nation, ahead of Nebraska, California and most other states.

“The Percentage of Graduates Who Took an AP Test” WCSD ranks 13th, ahead of Vermont which has 2 ½ times the per-student funding.

“ACT test for Math and English” WCSD ranked 18th and 23rd respectively, again ahead of many high performing states like Colorado, Utah and Oregon.

Unfortunately, WCSD also ranked low in some key areas such as “Per Student Funding” 50th; “Student Teacher Ratio” 49th; and “Graduation Rate” 43rd.

EDAWN commissioned the report to answer the question that we often get from our prospects about the poor education rankings of the state. We know that our graduates here are very good because the companies we work with are usually quite impressed with the quality of our workforce.

So why the “bad schools” reputation? When I arrived here just over two years ago I was told by people in the community that our public education system here was bad! That is not what you want to hear when the mission of EDAWN is to attract and retain quality jobs and knowing that the top concern for a potential employer is the quality and availability of an educated workforce.

It seems that there are some that want to perpetuate the image that our schools are bad and our workforce uneducated. They point to the usual metrics when it comes to education rankings, dollars spent per student, classroom size and graduation rate. We rank very low in all three.

Thankfully, it seems that there is more to education than funding, although I think many will agree that our schools need more, not based on a funding comparison but on the actual feedback provided by our superintendent and our teachers. They are in the classrooms committed to helping our kids be successful but not having adequate resources to do what they know is needed.

Our WCS D is producing more college and career ready students with less. Our teachers and students are showing real results and getting better every year. We have a very good education system that deserves our respect and our support, even if it means more funding at some point.