



CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

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District escalates transparency, launches new site at State of the District address

"Open Book" highlights revenue and spending, encourages community input

LAS VEGAS – Honoring his commitment to be transparent with the community, Clark County School District Superintendent Dwight D. Jones announced the launch of the "Open Book," a new website that allows the public to see the revenue and expenses needed to keep the nation's fifth-largest school district operating.

"We've asked everyone to be more accountable," Jones said. Funds are dwindling at the same time expectations are rising. Making our budget information easily accessible to the public tells the taxpayers: we are accountable to you."

The "Open Book" effort is all about earning community trust, Jones added.

Since the beginning of his tenure with the District, Jones emphasized the need to have an open conversation with the community. "Open Book" is an interactive site, which features an option for visitors to suggest ways the District can better spend its existing funds.

"Taxpayers need to know that dollars are being spent on needs, not luxuries. And we are looking at innovative ways to either cut costs or get a bigger return on our investment," Jones said.

During the speech, Jones focused on spending wisely, citing several examples of difficult cuts the District has already made to keep spending reductions away from the classroom.

Cuts to the administrative and central office budget saved \$32 million while the elimination of the year-round schedule in 2010-11 saved the District an additional \$13 million. In 2011-12, the District consolidated school bell times to save \$10 million in transportation costs. The District has cut nearly \$600 million from its budget over the last four years.

Clark County Board of School Trustees President Carolyn Edwards believes "Open Book" will educate the public on the District's spending habits. Many people, she says, will be surprised to see that 90 percent of the District's budget is spent on employee salaries and benefits. The

District also spends just \$8,000 per student. To put that in context, New York Department of Education, the nation's largest school district, spends \$19,597 per student. The national average is \$10,292 spent per student.

Edwards cautions critics, saying, "This voluntary effort by the District should be applauded. This is where we need our critical friends to be helpful. Hard budget decisions have been and will continue to be made as we strive to better inform the community. We encourage all with helpful criticism to utilize the 'guest book' feature on the site and submit their suggestions for cost savings."

During the speech, Jones took a moment to acknowledge the academic gains made by District students over the last year. Reports from the 2009-2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress, "The Nation's Report Card," showed CCSD eighth-grade students were among the highest in the nation in academic gains in reading and math. Nearly a third of the District's schools earned a 5-Star ranking on the annual School Performance Framework, which assigns schools a rank based on academics, student growth and engagement. District students also improved in nearly every category on state exams.

Despite the economic downturn and the tough budget cuts, Jones remained more optimistic than ever about the District improving over the long term, laying out what Clark County residents can expect from the school district in 2013:

- Implementation of the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI). The initiative puts low-income high school students in Advanced Placement (AP) classes and provides incentives for teachers and students who complete AP courses.
- Implementation of more stringent curriculum in middle schools, including the Springboard curriculum and International Baccalaureate. The Springboard coursework puts District middle school students on track for post-secondary education with advanced coursework that focuses on critical thinking skills.
- Implementation of the Common Core State Standards that align with national education goals. Requirements for proficiency will be more rigorous than current state standards. Though test scores may drop before showing improvement, students will be prepared to compete in a global economy by raising the bar of achievement.
- The District is in the early stages of designing a model to expand the reach of exemplary teachers.

District leaders also reminded the audience in attendance that Western High School is home to a dozen community-based offices that hosted open houses to educate media and event guests about services offered and ways to get involved.

Clark County Board of Schools Trustee Vice President Lorraine Alderman issued a call to action, "Each and every one of the offices is opening their doors to you and they stand ready to educate you on the services they provide and how you can help. Take me up on this, you will be inspired with what you see, and I bet you find a way, even if it's a small way, you can help these programs change lives."

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