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STATE OF NEVADA

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE-MANAGEMENT

RELATIONS BOARD

WASHOE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION,

Complainant,

ITEM NO. 778

CASE NO. A1-046034

WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Respondents,

ORDER

For Complainant:

Sandra G. Lawrence, Esq., for Washoe Education Association.

For Respondent:

Rick R. Hsu, Esq., for Washoe County School District

This matter came on before the State of Nevada, Local Government Employee-Management Relations Board ("Board") on March 8, 2012 for consideration and decision pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Employee-Management Relations Act ("the Act"); NAC Chapter 288, NRS chapter 233B, and was properly noticed pursuant to Nevada's open meeting laws. This order is issued pursuant to NAC 288.410 and NRS 233B.120.

Washoe County School District ("WCSD") is a local government employer and is subject to the provisions of the Act.

Petitioner Washoe Education Association ("WEA") is the recognized bargaining agent for the bargaining unit of licensed employees (including teachers) who are employed by WCSD. Beginning in May of 2011, WEA began negotiating the terms of a collective bargaining agreement with WCSD. During the course of negotiations, WEA submitted the three requests for bargaining to WCSD which are the subject of this petition. WEA submitted a request to bargain over teacher performance evaluations, the process for reversion of post-probationary employees back to probationary status owing to a new statutory requirement imposed by the Legislature deeming certain post-probationary employees as probationary, and the definition of a grievance.

WCSD declined to negotiate these three topics with WEA. WEA then filed this petition for declaratory order with the Board, seeking a declaration that WCSD is obligated, by NRS 288.150, to negotiate each of these three proposals with WEA.

The Act imposes a duty on local government employers to negotiate specified terms of employment with a recognized bargaining agent. NRS 288.150(1). The Act specifies those subjects, for which bargaining is mandatory, by setting forth a list of such topics in NRS 288.150(2).

The Act allows for, but does not require, bargaining over topics that are not mandatory subjects of bargaining, and requires local government employers to discuss such topics with a recognized bargaining agent. NRS 288.150(6).

Whether or not a particular proposal is a mandatory subject of bargaining under NRS 288.150 is a determination that must be made by this Board. NAC 288.100; Clark County School Dist. v. Local Government Emp. Management Relations Bd., 90 Nev. 442, 446, 530 P.2d 114, 117 (1974) (hereafter "Clark County School Dist.").

The Nevada Supreme Court has confirmed that it is within the authority of this Board to apply a "significantly related" test to determine whether or not a particular topic is a mandatory subject of bargaining. Truckee Meadows Fire Protection Dist. v. International Ass'n of Fire Fighters, Local 2487, 109 Nev. 367, 849 P.2d 343 (1993) (hereafter "Truckee Meadows"). Under the significantly related test, a topic that is not specifically enumerated in NRS 288.150(2) may nonetheless be a mandatory subject of bargaining if it bears a "significant relationship" to one or more of the enumerated subjects of bargaining listed in NRS 288.150(2). Id. In order to resolve questions arising under the Act concerning mandatory subjects of bargaining, the Board may look to and evaluate sources of law outside of the Act. See City of Reno v. Reno Police Protective Ass'n, 98 Nev. 472, 653 P.2d 156 (1982).

Teacher Performance Evaluations

This Board first addressed the question of teacher performance evaluations as a mandatory subject of bargaining in 1971, and held at that time that teacher performance was a mandatory subject of bargaining. <u>In the Matter of Washoe County School Dist. and Washoe</u>

<u>Teacher's Ass'n.</u>, EMRB Item No. 3 (October 9, 1971). That decision was subsequently reviewed by the Nevada Supreme Court which upheld the Board's conclusion that performance evaluations were a mandatory subject of bargaining. <u>Clark County School Dist.</u>, at 448-449, 530 P.2d at 118-119.

In response to the Nevada Supreme Court's decision, the Nevada Legislature amended NRS 288.150 to limit the subjects of mandatory bargaining to those subjects set forth in an enumerated list. A.B. 572, 58th Leg. (Nev. 1975), 1975 Nev. Stat. at 920-921. See also Truckee Meadows at 372, 849 P.2d at 347, n. 1 (1993).

Following the 1975 amendments to NRS 288.150, this Board twice found that teacher performance evaluations were not a mandatory subject of bargaining: in 1976 in Washoe Co. Teachers Assn. v. Washoe Sch. Dist. and the Bd. of Trustees of the Washoe Co. Sch. Dist., Item No. 56, EMRB Case No. A1-045297 (1976), and again in 1981. Nevada Classified Sch. Employees Assn. v. Clark Co. Sch. Dist., Item No. 111, EMRB Case No. A1-045345 (1981).

In 1988 the Board again addressed the issue of teacher performance evaluations. Pershing County Classroom Teachers Ass'n v. Pershing County School District, Item No. 212, EMRB Case No. A1-045416 (1988) ("Pershing County"). The reasoning in Pershing County is similar to the arguments advanced by the WEA in this case. Pershing County considered legislative changes to NRS Chapter 391 which had been made during a prior legislative session and concluded that the amendments to NRS Chapter 391 which tied teacher performance evaluations to the dismissal process were sufficient to push teacher performance evaluations into the realm of subjects that were significantly related to a mandatory subject of bargaining. Because of the heightened importance of performance evaluations to dismissing teachers under Chapter 391, the Board held in Item 212 that performance evaluations had become a mandatory subject of bargaining.

The Pershing County School District sought judicial review of this Board's order in Pershing County. Upon judicial review, the First Judicial District Court in Carson City ruled that teacher performance evaluations are not a mandatory subject of bargaining and remanded the matter back to the Board for reconsideration in light of the District Court's order. The District

Court did not apply the significantly related test, and instead stated that NRS 391.3125 addressed teacher performance evaluations by requiring that evaluations be developed by conferring with the elected representative of the teachers, and the process of conferring with the teachers pursuant to NRS 391.3125 "does not encompass 'bargaining' within the meaning of NRS 288.150." The District Court's order was issued on May 16, 1990. (The District Court's order was included as Exhibit 3 to the Response to Petition for Declaratory Order).

Three years later, in 1993, the Nevada Supreme Court confirmed the validity of the Board's significantly related test to determine whether a topic was a mandatory subject of bargaining in Truckee Meadows, 109 Nev. 367, 849 P.2d 343 (1993).

In 2004, the Board again considered the issue of teacher performance evaluations and, relying upon Truckee Meadows, applied the significantly related test to find that teacher performance evaluations were a mandatory subject of bargaining. The Board looked to Truckee Meadows as authority to disregard the District Court's decision in the Pershing County case and to apply the significantly related test to the issue of teacher performance evaluations. Washoe Education Ass'n v. Washoe County School Dist., Item No. 575A, EMRB Case No. A1-045792 (2004). However, the Board's decision in Item 575A was subsequently set aside in 2005 by the First District Court on petition for judicial review. In setting aside the Board's order, the District Court explained that "it is unreasonable for the EMRB to apply the significantly related test in a manner that renders other statutory provisions meaningless." (The District Court's order was included as Exhibit 8 to the Petition for Declaratory Order). Thereafter WEA filed an appeal of the District Court's decision to the Nevada Supreme Court; however that proceeding was resolved by a settlement and without a decision from the Supreme Court on the merits of the District Court's order.

In 2011, the Nevada Legislature enacted significant changes to the laws governing educators, which included changes to both NRS Chapter 391 and NRS Chapter 288.

Regarding teacher performance evaluations, WEA contends that recent statutory changes heighten the role that performance evaluations play in salary and wage rates and in disciplinary proceedings. Both "salary and wage rates" and "disciplinary proceedings" are mandatory

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subjects of bargaining under NRS 288.150(2)(a) and (i), respectively. As to salary and wage rates, A.B. 229, 76th Leg. (Nev. 2011) requires a school district to establish a program for performance pay for teachers and allows that teacher evaluations may be included as a component of the program. 2011 Nev. Stat. at 2283. As to disciplinary and discharge proceedings, A.B. 225 sets the criteria for when a post-probationary teacher is deemed to revert back to probationary status. This reversion back to probationary status is based solely upon performance evaluations. A.B. 225 § 1, 76th Leg. (Nev. 2011), 2011 Nev. Stat. at 2258.

Further, a new section of the Act, NRS 288.151, as adopted by A.B. 229, 76th Leg. (Nev. 2011), 2011 Nev. Stat at 2261, allows that performance evaluations must be considered by a school district when the district conducts a reduction in force. NRS 288.151(3). The procedure for conducting a reduction in force is also a mandatory subject of bargaining. NRS 288.150(2)(v). Given the increased importance that performance evaluations play in these areas, WEA contends that performance evaluations have now become significantly related to each of these mandatory subjects of bargaining and that NRS 288.150 and the significantly related test therefore impose a duty on WCSD to bargain with WEA over teacher performance evaluations.

The Board's use of the significantly related test has twice been considered and approved by the Nevada Supreme Court, although not entirely without reservation. In Clark County School Dist., the Nevada Supreme Court stated, "[t]he 'significantly related' standard adopted by the EMRB is a reasonable guideline if reasonably applied, and it is safe to suppose that it usually will be." Clark County School Dist. at 499, 530 P.2d at 119. When the Nevada Supreme Court again confirmed the use of the significantly related test in Truckee Meadows, it quoted Clark County School Dist. as authority that the significantly related test is reasonable "if it is reasonably applied." Truckee Meadows at 376, 849 P.2d at 349. This approval of the significantly related test is not universal and contemplates the possibility of instances in which it would not be reasonable for the Board to apply the significantly related test. Accordingly, the Board must first confront a threshold question of whether it is reasonable to apply the significantly related test in this case before reaching the question of whether teacher performance evaluations are significantly related to any of the enumerated mandatory subjects of bargaining

 in NRS 288.150. As set forth below, the Board concludes that it is not reasonable to apply the significantly related test.

The mandatory bargaining provisions of the Act apply to all local government employers in Nevada. NRS 288.060; NRS 288.150(1). However, many local government employers are also subject to profession-specific statutory provisions beyond the requirements of the Act. Many of these other statutes contain provisions that also touch upon mandatory subjects of bargaining and in such cases the Legislature has subordinated these statutory provisions to the collective bargaining process where it wished to do so. e.g. NRS 289.057 (statutory terms regarding suspension of a peace officer are subordinate to terms of negotiated collective bargaining agreement); NRS 391.166 (school district's incentive pay program established by collective bargaining).

As a general principle, the scope of mandatory bargaining under the Act is intended to be broad. See <u>Truckee Meadows</u> at 375, 849 P.2d at 349. However, the ultimate source of a local government employer's bargaining obligations is the Legislature; and where the Legislature has separately addressed the bargaining relationship between a local government employer and a bargaining agent over a particular topic in statutes outside of the Act, and where those statutes provide that relationship is something less than negotiation, the Board concludes that it is not reasonable to apply the significantly related test. In such cases, an application of the significantly related test would render such other statutory provisions as meaningless and would create uncertainty as to the extent of a local government employer's bargaining obligations.

Thus, the Board will look to other law to inform our decision of whether it is reasonable to use the significantly related test.

In this case, the Board looks to NRS 391.3125(2) which states: "each [school] board, following consultation with and involvement of elected representatives of the teachers or their designees, shall develop a policy for objective evaluations in narrative form." The Board also looks to NRS 391.3127 which applies the same language to school administrators. These provisions establish the relationship between school district employers and bargaining agents on the subject matter of performance evaluations. As these subsections state, the school board is

required to "consult" with the bargaining agent. "Consultation" is distinct from, and is less involved than "negotiation." Black's Law Dict. 311, 1059 (7th ed. 1999).

The Board also notes that A.B. 222, 76th Leg. (Nev. 2011) established the Teachers and Leaders Council of Nevada and charged that body with the task of developing recommendations for teacher performance evaluations which are to be recommended to the State Board of Education in order to develop, by regulation, a statewide performance evaluation system. See NRS 391.460-.465. While school boards will still be required to consult with teacher representatives to develop a policy for performance evaluations going forward, these policies will be required to comply with any statewide evaluation system developed by the Board of Education. A.B. 222 § 8.5, 2011 Nev. Stat. at 3089.

Accordingly, as the bargaining relationship between WEA and WCSD concerning teacher performance evaluations is defined by NRS 391.3125(2) as requiring consultation rather than negotiation over performance evaluations, and given the statutes governing the role of the Teachers and Leaders Council of Nevada and the State Board of Education, this Board concludes that it is not reasonable to apply the significantly related test in this instance. Because the Board does not apply the significantly related test in this case, the Board makes no finding as to whether teacher performance evaluations are significantly related to any of the enumerated subjects of bargaining listed in NRS 288.150(2).

In the absence of the significantly related test, the Board looks to the specifically enumerated mandatory subjects of bargaining in NRS 288.150(2) as authority to determine whether a topic is a mandatory subject of bargaining. Teacher performance evaluations are not listed as a mandatory subject of bargaining under NRS 288.150(2). Therefore, the Board concludes that WCSD was not obligated to bargain with WEA on the topic of teacher performance evaluations.

Process for Post-Probationary Teachers to Revert Back to Probationary Status

The second issue to be addressed in WEA's petition concerns the process of reverting a post-probationary teacher to probationary status which is established by section 1 of A.B. 225 76th Leg. (Nev. 2011) and is noted above. WEA argues that post-probationary teachers have the

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right to procedural due process under <u>Cleveland Bd. of Education v. Loudermill</u>, 470 U.S. 532 (1985), and given that some sort of procedure must be in place for these post-probationary teachers to revert back to probationary status WCSD is mandated to negotiate those procedures with WEA.

WEA has articulated an argument that the reversion procedures are a specifically enumerated as a mandatory subject of bargaining. NRS 288.150(2)(i) lists "discipline and discharge procedures" as a mandatory subject of bargaining. WEA argues that a reversion back to probationary status is disciplinary in nature, and that the reversion process is therefore a mandatory subject of bargaining as required by NRS 288.150(2)(i).

This question turns on whether or not a reversion back to probationary status is disciplinary in nature. As discussed below, the Board concludes that the reversion of post-probationary teachers to probationary status is not a disciplinary action so as to bring the reversion process under the mandatory bargaining requirement of NRS 288.150(2)(i).

As set forth above, the reversion of a post-probationary teacher is based solely upon performance evaluations. NRS 391.3125(2) addresses these performance evaluations and states in part: "[t]he primary purpose of an evaluation is to provide a format for constructive assistance." Further, performance evaluations are not based upon instances of misconduct and are not considered to be a form of discipline. See NRS 391.3125(5). Accordingly, the Board concludes that the process for reversion of a post-probationary teacher to back to probationary status, which is solely dependent upon these non-disciplinary evaluations, is not disciplinary in nature. Therefore the reversion process is not specifically enumerated as a mandatory subject of bargaining under NRS 288.150(2)(i).

WEA also invokes the significantly related test and contends that the reversion process is significantly related to discharge procedures as the apparent purpose of reverting teachers back to probationary status is to make it easier to discharge such teachers.

As set forth above, the Board will look to other sources of law in order to determine whether it is reasonable to apply the significantly related test.

A.B. 225, 76th Leg. (Nev. 2011) addressed the reversion of post-probationary teachers to probationary status. Section 4 of A.B. 225 contains an amendment to the language of NRS 391.3116.

NRS 391.3116 states in part:

...the provisions of NRS 391.311 to 391.3197, inclusive, do not apply to a teacher, administrator, or other licensed employee who has entered into a contract with the board negotiated pursuant to chapter 288 of NRS if the contract contains separate provisions relating to the board's right to dismiss or refuse to reemploy the employee or demote an administrator.

NRS 391.311-.3197, in turn, contain a procedure to allow for a hearing for teachers to request a hearing upon a demotion, specifically at NRS 391.317-.3197. While NRS 391.3116 renders these procedures generally inapplicable to situations controlled by a collective bargaining agreement, the amendments to NRS 391.3116 in section 4 of A.B. 225 state that the reversion to probationary status requirement of NRS 391.3129 is excluded from NRS 391.3116's general exemption.

Thus, the current version of NRS 391.3116, as prompted by the amendments enacted by section 4 to A.B. 225 appear to hold that the procedures in NRS 391.311-.3197 apply to teacher reversion from post-probationary status notwithstanding the terms of a negotiated collective bargaining agreement.

Given that the Legislature has excluded bargained-for processes from applying to reversion of post-probationary teachers, it is not reasonable to apply the significantly related test in this instance in order to determine that the reversion process is a mandatory subject of bargaining. Because the significantly related test does not apply in this instance, the Board makes no finding as to whether the reversion of post-probationary teachers to a probationary status is significantly related to discharge procedures.

Accordingly, the Board determines that WEA's request to negotiate the process for reversion of post-probationary teachers to probationary status does not concern a mandatory subject of bargaining.

Definition of a Grievance

NRS 288.150(2)(o) requires that "[g]rievance and arbitration procedures for resolution of disputes relating to interpretation or application of collective bargaining agreements" are mandatory subjects of bargaining. Where a negotiation request relates to the interpretation or application of a collective bargaining agreement, the request is a mandatory subject of bargaining under subsection 2(o), however if the request goes beyond the interpretation or application of the collective bargaining agreement's language then mandatory bargaining is not required by subsection 2(o). Ormsby County Teachers Ass'n v. Carson City School Dist., Item No. 174, EMRB Case No. A1-045382 (1985).

WEA's request in this case attempts to expand grievance procedures to include items that are not related to the interpretation or application of a collective bargaining agreement and seeks to expand the definition of a grievance to include "school board policies, regulations and the Nevada Revised Statutes." This request is outside of scope of the statutory language of NRS 288.150(o). Therefore WEA's proposal to negotiate the definition of a grievance is broader than the scope of mandatory bargaining required by NRS 288.150(2)(o) and is not a mandatory subject of bargaining in this instance.

FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

- 1. Petitioner Washoe Education Association is an employee organization and is the recognized bargaining agent for licensed employees employed by Respondent Washoe County School District.
- 2. Respondent Washoe County School District is a local government employer.
- 3. The Local Government Employee-Management Relations Act requires a local government employer to negotiate in good faith over the subject of mandatory bargaining listed in NRS 288.150(2).
- 4. The EMRB has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide disputes between employee organizations and local government employers concerning whether the Act requires mandatory bargaining over a particular topic.

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5. WCSD declined to negotiate over WEA's request concerning employee evaluations. (Exhibit 2 to Petition for Declaratory Order).

- 6. Employee evaluations are not specifically enumerated as a mandatory subject of bargaining in NRS 288.150(2).
- 7. The Board applies the significantly related test to determine whether a particular proposal is significantly related to one or more of the enumerated subjects of mandatory bargaining where it is reasonable to do so.
- 8. The Board may look to other sources of law to inform its decision of whether it is reasonable to apply the significantly related test.
- 9. It is not reasonable to apply the significantly related test where the parties' bargaining relationship is addressed by statutes outside of the Act when those statutes contemplate a relationship that is less than the good-faith negotiations required by the Act.
- 13 | 10. NRS 319.3125 and 391.3127 require a school board to consult with a bargaining agent 14 | over the development of employee evaluations.
 - 11. The consultation required by NRS 391.3125 and 391.3127 is less than the good-faith negotiations of the Act.
 - 12. As the bargaining relationship between WEA and WCSD is addressed in NRS 391.3125 and 391.3127, it is not reasonable to apply the significantly related test in this instance to determine whether employee evaluations are a mandatory subject of bargaining.
 - 13. WCSD declined to negotiate over WEA's proposal concerning the process for the reversion of post-probationary teachers to probationary status. (Exhibit 1 to Petition for Declaratory Order).
- 23 | 14. A teacher's reversion to probationary status is based solely upon performance evaluations.
- 25 | 15. The primary purpose of performance evaluations is constructive assistance and is not disciplinary.
 - 16. Teacher performance evaluations are based upon performance rather than instances of misconduct and are not disciplinary.

- 1 | 17. As teacher performance evaluations are not disciplinary, the reversion process which is 2 | based solely upon said evaluations is not disciplinary.
 - 18. The procedure for reversion of a post-probationary teacher to probationary status is not a "discipline procedure" under NRS 288.150(2)(i).
 - 19. The recent amendments to NRS Chapter 391 in A.B. 225 § 1, 76th Leg. (Nev. 2011) establish the process of reverting a post-probationary teacher to probationary status.
 - 20. NRS 391.3116 generally subordinates the procedures set forth in NRS 319.311-.3197 to the collective bargaining process required by the Act.
 - 21. The recent amendments to NRS 391.3116 in A.B. 225 § 4, 76th Leg. (Nev. 2011) excludes the process of reverting a post-probationary teacher to probationary status established in A.B. 225 § 1 from NRS 391.3116.
 - 22. It is not reasonable to apply the significantly related test to ascertain whether WEA's request to negotiate the process for reversion to probationary status is a mandatory subject of bargaining under the Act.
- WCSD declined to negotiate over WEA's proposed definition of a "grievance." (Exhibit
 3 to Petition for Declaratory Order).
 - 24. NRS 288.150(2)(o) requires mandatory bargaining over "grievance and arbitration procedures for resolution of disputes relating to interpretation or application of collective bargaining agreements."
- 25. If a negotiations request is broader than the interpretation or application of a collective bargaining agreement, then NRS 288.150(2)(o) does not require that the proposal be negotiated.
 - 26. WEA's proposal seeks to expand the definition of a grievance beyond the interpretation or application of the collective bargaining agreement to include school board policy, administrative regulations and Nevada Revised Statutes.

DECLARATION AND ORDER

Having made the foregoing findings, and good cause appearing therefore as set forth above,

1	STATE OF NEVADA	
2	LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE-MANAGEMENT	
3	RELATIONS BOARD	
4		
5	WASHOE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION,	
6	Complainant,	
7	vs.	CASE NO. A1-046034
8	WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT,	
9	Respondents,	NOTICE OF ENTRY OF ORDER
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12	To: Sandra G. Lawrence, Esq., for Washoe Education Association	
13	To: Rick R. Hsu, Esq., for Washoe County School District	
14	PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that an ORDER was entered in the above-entitled matter on	
15	April 4, 2012.	
16	A copy of said order is attached hereto.	
17	DATED this 4th day of April, 2012.	
18		CAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE-
19	MA	ANAGEMENT RELATIONS BOARD
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21		JOYCE A. HOLTZ, Executive Assistant
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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING I hereby certify that I am an employee of the Local Government Employee-Management Relations Board, and that on the 4th day of April, 2012, I served a copy of the foregoing ORDER by mailing a copy thereof, postage prepaid to: Sandra G. Lawrence, Esq. Dyer, Lawrence, Penrose, Flaherty, Donaldson, & Prunty 2805 Mountain Street Carson City, NV 89703 Rick R. Hsu, Esq. Maupin, Cox & LeGoy 4785 Caughlin Parkway Reno, NV 89519 Richard G. Barrows, Esq. Wilson Barrows Salyer Jones 442 Court Street Elko, NV 89801 YCE HOLTZ, Executive Assistant