

Agency: UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Request Title: *Assessment and Accountability 2025*

Purpose Statement:

Amend Utah Code Section [53E-4-303](#) to increase the grade range for the English, mathematics, science and writing sections of the state selected standards assessment and amend Utah Code to remove Section [53E-4-304](#).

What is the nature of your request?

Select one:

- POLICY REQUEST** – You are seeking changes to Utah State Code to improve your program/services.
- FUNDING REQUEST** – You are seeking new or additional financial resources to support a program/service for education.
- BOTH POLICY and FUNDING** – You are proposing a new program or expansion of an existing program that will require new/amended state code and financial resources.

Questions? Please contact:

Todd Call (Todd.Call@schools.utah.gov) for questions related to a funding request and
Greg Connell (Greg.Connell@schools.utah.gov) for questions related to a policy request.

Current Funding for FY 2024:

FY 2024 Ongoing Funding = \$XXX

FY 2024 One-Time Funding = \$XXX

Projected Results:

- To increase the grade range that the State adopted standards assessment may test from 8 to 10th grade.
- Remove irrelevant code sections.

Rationale: [53E-4-304](#) introduced the High School Assessments (aka Utah Aspire Plus) in 2019. Since the first year of implementation of these assessments student participation in these assessments have declined year over year. In 2024 only 81% of Utah's tenth grade students participated in this assessment. In addition to the reduced participation, LEA assessment directors have expressed concerns with administering a grade-based assessment in grades nine and ten. Prior to 2019 the Utah Standards Assessment, which is a grade-based assessment, was administered in grades three through ten. Some LEA's, including Wasatch School District have begun advocating that Utah return to that model to increase the value of state assessments in grades nine and ten.

If not funded/approved: If no legislative change is made, USBE staff will continue to support development and administration of the Utah Aspire Plus assessments. This will include additional efforts to improve reporting and effective use of the assessment results to increase their utility.

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

Name: Darin Nielsen

Email Address: Darin.nielsen@schools.utah.gov

Phone Number: 801-538-7811

USBE Section: Assessment and Accountability

Deputy Superintendent Name: [Patty Norman](#)

Email Address: Patty.norman@schools.utah.gov

Phone Number: 801-538-7760

USBE Section: Administration

POLICY REQUEST

- 1. Section(s) of State Code to be addressed (if none, insert “N/A”):**
53E-4-303 AND 53E-4-304
- 2. Summarize the request, the specific problem it will solve, and how it will solve the problem.**
53E-4-304 introduced the High School Assessments (aka Utah Aspire Plus) in 2019. Since the first year of implementation of these assessments student participation in these assessments have declined year over year. In 2024 only 81% of Utah's tenth grade students participated in this assessment. In addition to the reduced participation, LEA assessment directors have expressed concerns with administering a grade-based assessment in grades nine and ten. Prior to 2019 the Utah Standards Assessment, which is a grade-based assessment, was administered in grades three through ten. Some LEA's, including Wasatch School District have begun advocating that Utah return to that model to increase the value of state assessments in grades nine and ten.
- 3. Describe the history of the issues or concerns including relevant context and timelines:**
2018 - The high school assessment (aka, Utah Aspire Plus) is developed as an innovative assessment comprising Utah developed English language arts, mathematics, and science as well as ACT Aspire test questions that are aligned to the relative Utah Core Standards.
2019 - Utah Aspire Plus is administered for the first time.
2021 - Utah Aspire Plus is administered post-pandemic with participation rates that were significantly smaller than 2019.
2022, 2023, 2024 - Student participation rates continue to decline with rates as low as 81%.
2023, 2024 - LEA assessment representatives begin expressing concerns about the usefulness of the Utah Aspire Plus assessments in evaluating program effectiveness.
2023, 2024 - The Utah Assessment Accountability Policy Advisory Committee discusses concerns about student participation and usefulness of the Utah Aspire Plus Assessment.
2023 - The Utah Education Policy Center is selected to conduct a study of the Utah Aspire Plus assessment.
2024 - The Education Interim Committee includes the Utah Aspire Plus assessment on their August agenda. In this meeting an LEA leadership team shares their concerns regarding the Utah Aspire Plus assessment format (i.e., end of grade test vs. end of course assessment)

4. What are the suggested legislative solutions? Include code references and suggested language where possible:

Amend [53E-4-303](#) by amend the section as follows:

[53E-4-303](#). Utah standards assessments -- Administration -- Review committee.

- (1) As used in this section, "computer adaptive assessment" means an assessment that measures the range of a student's ability by adapting to the student's responses, selecting more difficult or less difficult questions based on the student's responses.
- (2) The state board shall:
 - (a) adopt a standards assessment that:
 - (i) measures a student's proficiency in:
 - (A) mathematics for students in each of grades 3 through ~~8-10~~;
 - (B) English language arts for students in each of grades 3 through ~~8-10~~;
 - (C) science for students in each of grades 4 through ~~8-10~~; and
 - (D) writing for students in at least grades 5 and 8; and
 - (ii) except for the writing measurement described in Subsection (2)(a)(i)(D), is a computer adaptive assessment; and
 - (b) ensure that an assessment described in Subsection (2)(a) is:
 - (i) a criterion referenced assessment;
 - (ii) administered online;
 - (iii) aligned with the core standards for Utah public schools; and
 - (iv) adaptable to competency-based education as defined in Section 53F-5-501.

AND

Amend [53E-4-304](#) by striking the section.

~~Effective 5/14/2019~~

~~53E-4-304. High school assessments.~~

- ~~(1) The state board shall adopt a high school assessment that:~~
- ~~(a) is predictive of a student's college readiness as measured by the college readiness assessment described in Section 53E-4-305; and~~
- ~~(b) provides a growth score for a student from grade 9 to 10.~~

~~(2) A school district or charter school shall annually administer the high school assessment adopted by the state board under Subsection (1) to all students in grades 9 and 10.~~

~~(3) A teacher may use a student's score on the high school assessment adopted under Subsection (1) to improve the student's academic grade for or demonstrate the student's competency within a relevant course.~~

5. **Provide details, sources, research, and analysis to which forms evidence-basis for this request or the associated program (e.g. cost benefit analysis, program evaluation, results from pilot program, etc). Include whether this data is currently collected and available or whether new data will be collected:**

The Boards Assessment and Accountability Policy Advisory Committee has been discussing these concerns for several years. During a 2023 meeting, they recommended the Board conduct a study to better understand why participation rates have continued to decline. The Utah Education Policy Education Center was selected to conduct the study which will include parent, student, and educator interviews. The study is scheduled to be completed and shared in early January 2025. Below are the last two years participation rates for grade nine and ten.

