

## Agency: UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Request Title:** *Utah's K-8 Literacy and Numeracy Initiative*

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this bill is to elevate reading and math proficiency for all students, equipping them with critical skills for their academic journey and future through comprehensive support for educators and evidence-based learning initiatives.

### 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:

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

**Current Funding for FY 2026:** *(Provide current year funding differentiating one-time and ongoing funding for the program.)*

FY 2026 Ongoing Funding = \$9,644,300 (From [GS 2022 SB 127](#))

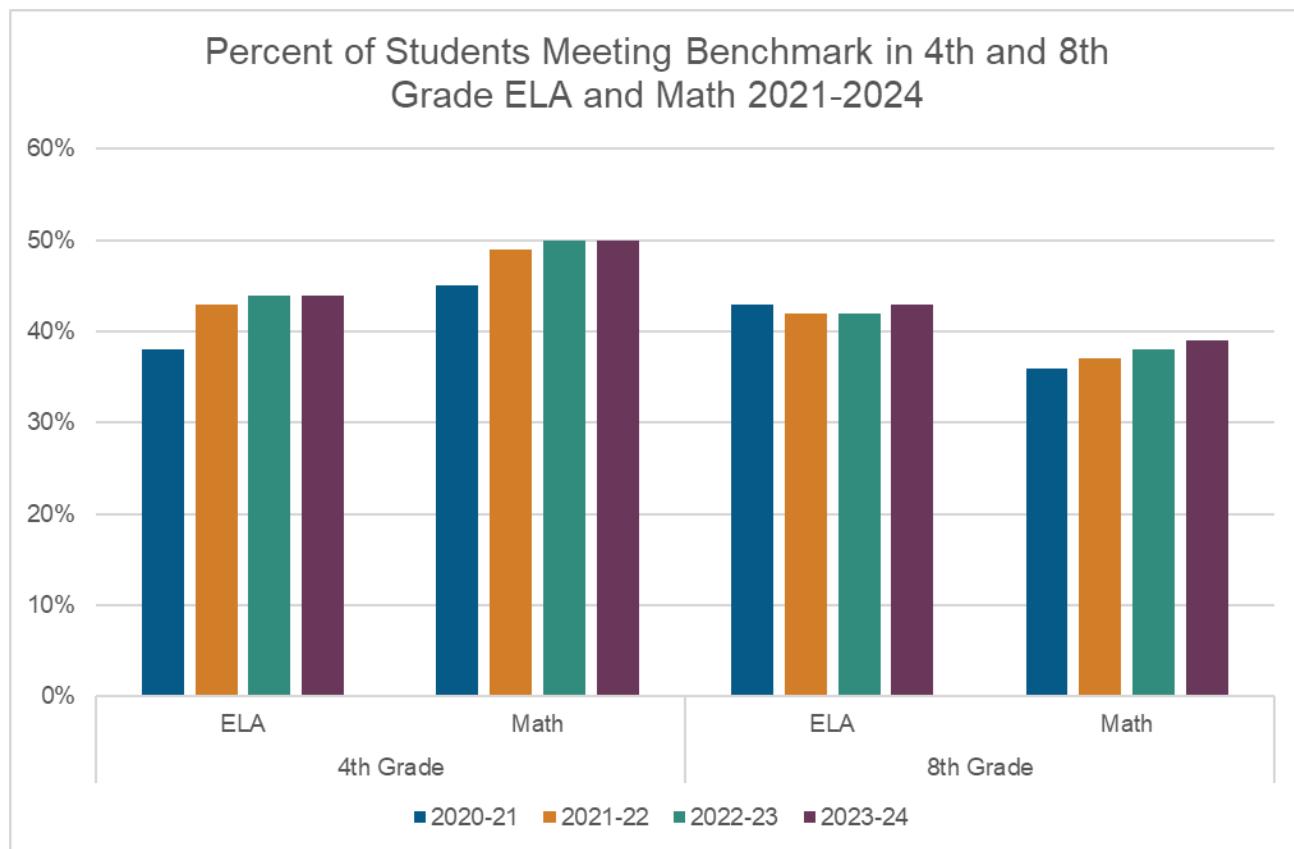
FY 2026 One-Time Funding = \$0.00

## Projected Results:

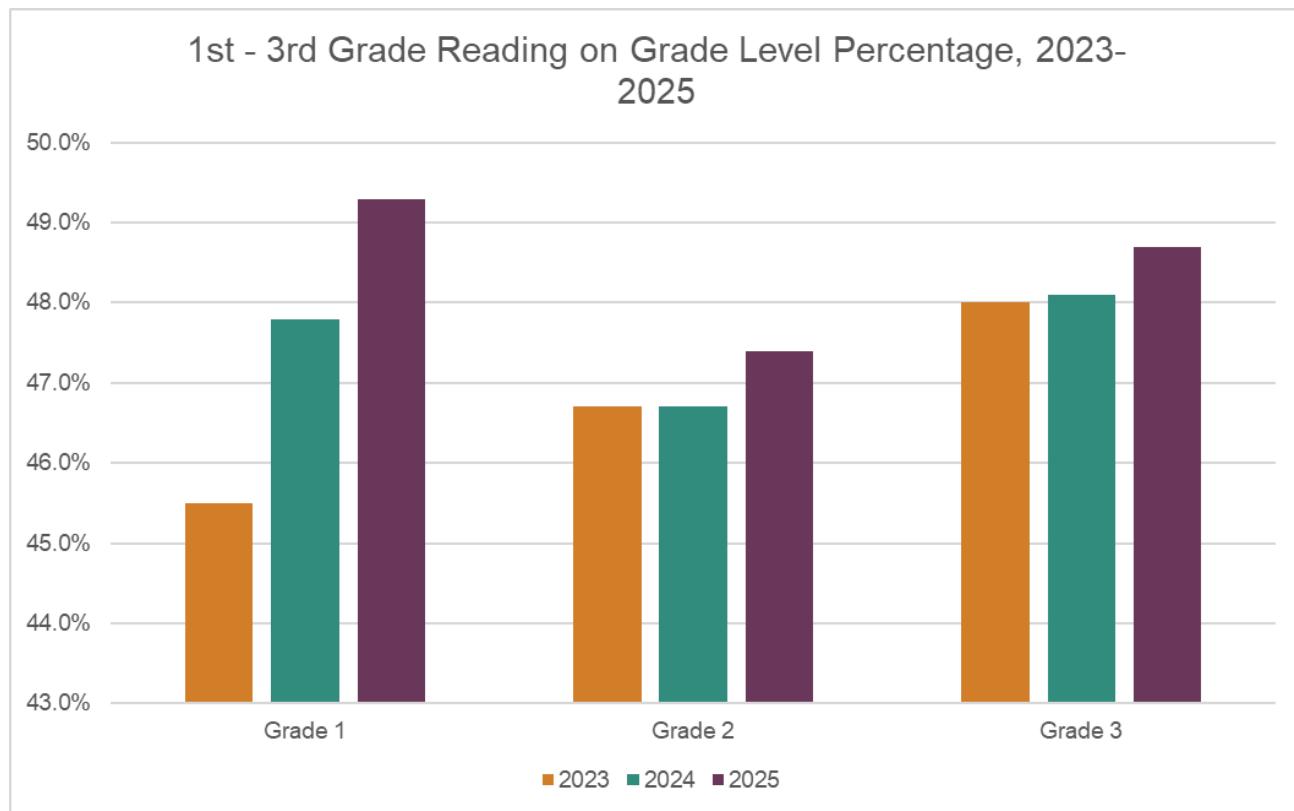
- Increase RISE ELA and Math scores in 4th and 8th grade.
- Increase teacher capacity to provide high-quality instruction in literacy and mathematics to all Utah students in grades K-8.

## Rationale:

- Average outcomes in RISE ELA and Math indicate that the majority of Utah students are not currently proficient in reading or mathematics.



- As a result of [SB 127 \(GS 2022\)](#), more students in grades 1-3 are reading at their grade level, and we expect this positive trend to continue.
  - Over 9,000 teachers have been instructed in and are using the science of reading instruction.
  - Over 1,000 elementary school leaders have been taught how to support instructional practices in the science of reading.



- Expansion of this program would extend successes to students in K-8 across both reading and mathematics.
  - Proposed changes represent a strategic effort to create a rigorous K-8 educational system that supports the development of both strong literacy and numeracy skills for all students.
  - Utah would lead the first strategic initiative of this scale across K-8 mathematics and literacy in the nation, providing a unique opportunity for students.
- This will be achieved through:
  - Enhanced professional learning for teachers,
  - Improved access to high quality instructional materials, and
  - Comprehensive assessment strategies that allow teachers to better meet the needs of Utah students.

**If not funded/approved:** *(Describe in 1 sentence the impact of not funding/approving this request. This needs to be based on factual evidence.)*

- [SB 127 \(GS 2022\)](#) Early Literacy Outcomes Improvement will continue to support LEAs in improving literacy efforts in grades K-3 through 2027
- State benchmark reading and math assessments will continue to be required in grades K-3.
  - In 2026, the USBE Assessment team will need to request an increase in funds to

- continue to support the State Mathematics Benchmark Assessments.
- LEAs will continue to absorb the burden of printing, administration, scoring, and data entry for the State Mathematics Benchmark Assessments.
- Early Learning Plans for all LEAs serving students in grade K-3 will continue unfunded (State Code [53E-4-307.5](#), [53G-7-218](#), [53E-3-521](#) and Utah Board Rule [R277-406](#)).
- There will be no dedicated state funding for literacy efforts in grades 4+.
- There will be no dedicated state funding for mathematics support for teachers or students.

## USBE Lead Point of Contact:

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Phone Number: Julie Clark: 801-538-7661, Molly Basham: 801-538-7529

USBE Section: Teaching and Learning

### Additional USBE points of contact (*as needed*):

Name: Meghan Everette

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Phone Number: 801-538-7739

USBE Section: Teaching and Learning

Deputy Superintendent Name: Leah Voorhies

Email Address: [leah.voorhies@schools.utah.gov](mailto:leah.voorhies@schools.utah.gov)

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USBE Section: Superintendency

## POLICY REQUEST

*This section only needs to be completed if you are making a policy request (creating or changing existing Utah Code language).*

1. Section(s) of State Code to be addressed (if none, insert "N/A"):

Code	Code Title	Action	Changes (repealed language in <b>RED</b> , new language in <b>BLUE</b> )
<a href="#"><u>53G-7-218</u></a>	Establishment of Early Learning Plan	<b>REPEAL</b>	
<a href="#"><u>53E-3-1001</u></a>	Statewide goal-- Emphasis on early literacy	Modify	<p><b>Rename:</b> Statewide Goal - Emphasis on Literacy and Mathematics</p> <p>Adjust to be a statewide and LEA goal on RISE ELA and RISE Math for grades 4 and 8.</p> <p>A SMART goal will be determined and based on average increase in proficiency on RISE ELA and Mathematics.</p>
<a href="#"><u>53E-3-1002</u></a>	Literacy coaching -- Professional learning:	Modify/Repeal /Add	<p><b>Rename:</b> Literacy and Mathematics Coaching - Professional Learning</p> <p><b>Section 1 and 2:</b> Include 12 regional elementary literacy coaches, 12 regional elementary mathematics coaches, 12 regional middle school literacy coaches, and 12 regional middle school mathematics coaches. Regional coaches would support all schools within their region, targeting support to the schools with low achievement. The purpose would be to support the schools in building the capacity of the staff in the buildings. (The code language would need to be adjusted.)</p> <p><b>Section 3:</b> Include funding for one additional FTE middle school coach of coaches.</p> <p><b>Section 4:</b> The state board shall provide professional learning support in early literacy and mathematics by:</p> <p class="list-item-l1">(a) facilitating professional learning opportunities to support literacy and mathematics coaches statewide that includes knowledge and skill development in best practice in literacy and mathematics coaching, adult learning practices, and</p>

			<p>job-embedded coaching;</p> <p><b>REPEAL:</b> Section 4 (b) and (c): regional professional learning coaches and collective efficacy professional learning.</p> <p><b>Add:</b> Provide funding for professional learning for educators in mathematics best practices for all teachers in grades K-8 that aligns with the requirements for obtaining a Utah elementary or middle school mathematics endorsement.</p> <p>Provide funding for professional learning in literacy and English Language Arts for educators in grades 4-8.</p> <p>Require elementary educators to obtain an elementary mathematics endorsement within 5 years of licensure as a Utah educator</p>
<a href="#"><u>53E-3-1003</u></a>	Science of reading	Modify	Convene a panel of science of reading experts <b>per topic</b> to support literacy advancement.
<a href="#"><u>53E-3-1004</u></a>	Community engagement for early literacy	<b>REPEAL</b>	<b>Repeal:</b> community engagement project and books to kids at home.
<a href="#"><u>53E-4-307</u></a>	Benchmark assessments in reading -- Report to parent	Modify	<p><b>Rename:</b> Benchmark assessments in reading and mathematics-report to parents</p> <p><b>Section 2:</b> The state board shall approve a benchmark <b>screening</b> assessment for use statewide by school districts and charter schools to assess the reading competency of students in <b>grades K through 8</b> as provided by this section.</p> <p><b>Section 2:</b> Incorporate <a href="#"><u>53E-4-307.5</u></a> Mathematics Benchmark Assessment. <b>The state board shall approve a benchmark screening assessment for use statewide by school districts and charter schools to assess mathematics competency of students in grades K-8 as provided by this section.</b></p>

			<p><b>Section 3:</b> A school district or charter school shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) administer benchmark screening assessments to students in grades K-8 at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year using the benchmark screening assessment approved by the state board; and</li> <li>(b) after administering a benchmark screening assessment, report the results to a student's parent</li> </ul> <p><b>Section 4 (vi):</b> Provide instructional materials that are evidence-informed for core instruction and evidence-based for intervention <b>for literacy</b>.</p> <p><b>Add: Section 4 (vii):</b> Provide instructional materials that are evidence-informed for core and intervention in mathematics.</p>
<u>53E-6-302</u>	Educator preparation programs	Modify	<p><b>Add Section 3 (iii):</b> Instruction in mathematics that aligns with the educator competencies and competency guide book established by the USBE.</p> <p><b>Add:</b> Require teacher preparation programs to place student teachers with teachers who hold mathematics endorsements and have been trained in the science of reading by 2028.</p> <p><b>Add:</b> Require IHEs to provide a pathway for teacher candidates to graduate with the coursework required to obtain a mathematics endorsement by 2028.</p>
<u>53G-10-306</u>	Science of reading curriculum	Modify	<p><b>Rename:</b> High Quality Instructional Materials for English Language Arts and Mathematics</p> <p>Each LEA shall adopt High Quality Instructional Materials for English Language Arts and Mathematics for core instruction and</p>

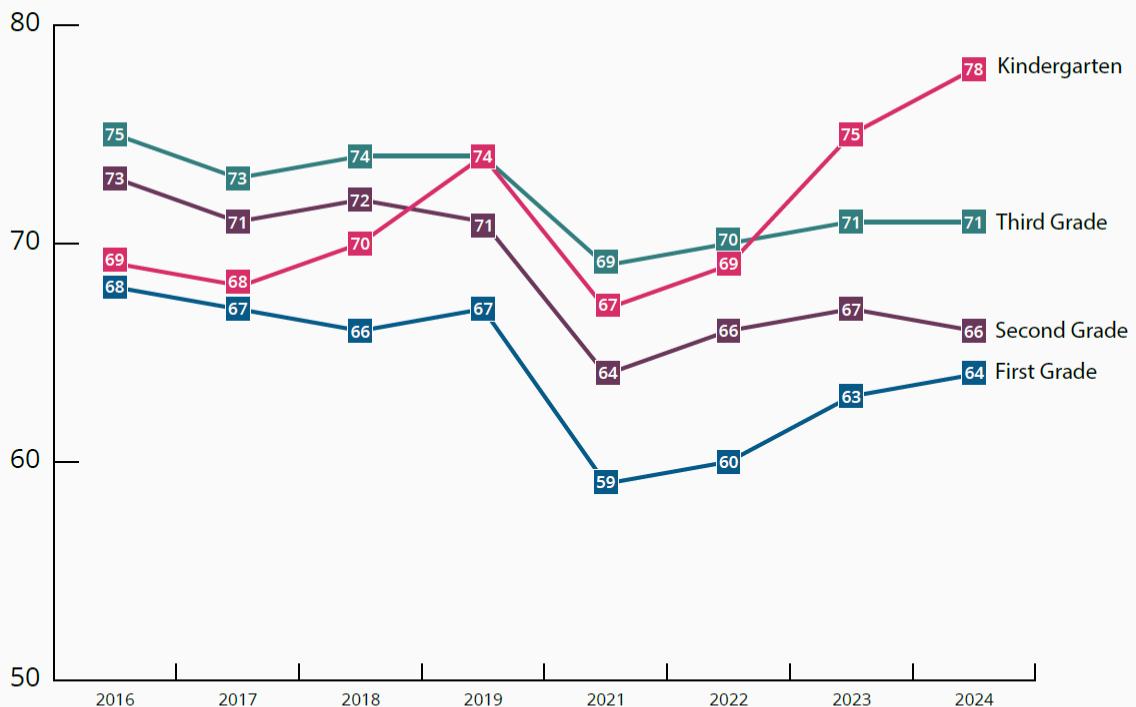
			intervention programs aligned to grade level Utah Core Standards and as defined by the State Board.
<a href="#"><u>53G-11-305</u></a>	Professional learning in change management	Modify	<p><b>Section 1:</b> The state board shall provide the individuals described in Subsection (2) with professional learning regarding change managements <a href="#">in literacy and mathematics</a></p> <p><b>Section 2:</b> Each elementary <a href="#">and middle school</a> <a href="#">or Junior High</a> principal and a principal supervisor, member of LEA leadership, and LEA literacy and <a href="#">mathematics specialist(s)</a> shall complete the professional learning described in Subsection (1) <a href="#">before June 30, 2031.</a></p>

2. Summarize the request, the specific problem it will solve, and how it will solve the problem. (Describe the issues or concerns the legislation will address:)
  - Prepare teachers to ensure educational excellence resulting in the mastery of foundational knowledge, application of logical reasoning, and achievement of personal goals.
  - Improve the educational experience of students in UT, preparing them to be successful in mathematics and English Language Arts.
  
3. Describe the history of the issues or concerns including relevant context and timelines:
  - Almost 2 decades of legislation relating to improving early literacy outcomes have not reflected significant improvements in student scores.
    - In 2004 [Senate Bill 230](#) (Reading Achievement Program) established a foundational framework for reading proficiency through mandated reading improvement plans.
    - In 2011, [House Bill 302](#) (Reading Program Amendments) significantly expanded the scope of intervention by requiring a benchmark assessment.
    - In 2018, [Senate Bill 194](#) (Early Literacy Program) broadened the scope from "reading" to "early literacy," emphasizing core instruction areas such as phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, oral language, and writing.
    - In 2020, [House Bill 114](#) (Early Learning Training and Assessment Amendments) expanded the focus to include early mathematics and

mandated early learning plans that incorporate both literacy and mathematics components. This bill also established statewide targets for growth goals and provided grants for professional learning and teacher preparation assessments.

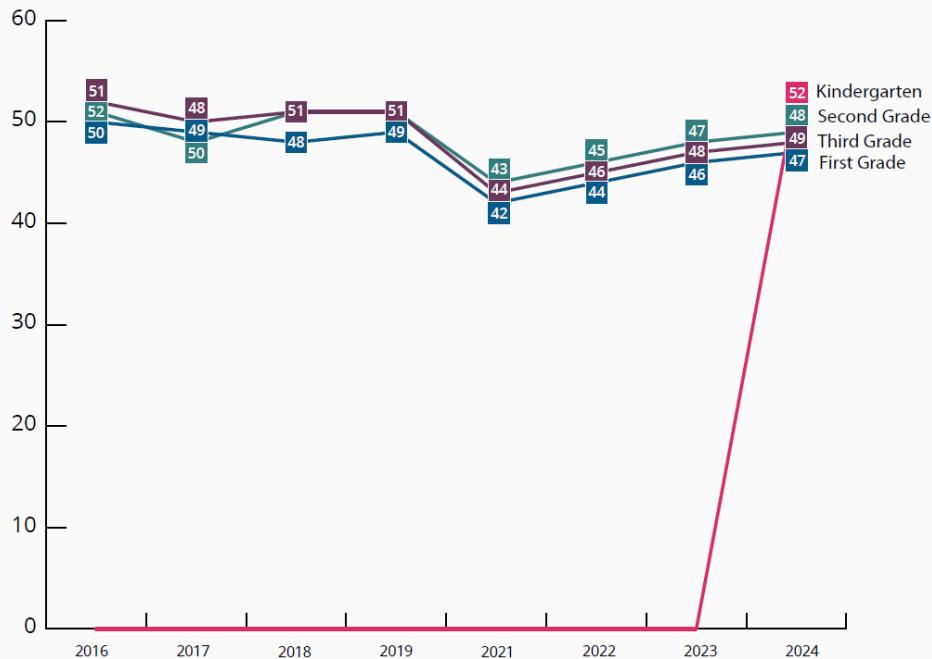
- Students assessment data from early implementation of [SB 127 \(GS 2022\)](#) demonstrates that the significant investment in improving literacy outcomes are impacting student achievement and are helping to close the student achievement gap from the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - In 2022, [Senate Bill 127](#) (Early Literacy Outcomes Improvement) aimed to enhance and align literacy strategies by setting a statewide proficiency goal of 70% of third grade students Reading on Grade Level (ROGL).

### Percentage of Students Reading At or Above Benchmark



Grade	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Kindergarten	69%	68%	70%	74%	67%	69%	75%	78%
First	68%	67%	66%	67%	59%	60%	63%	64%
Second	73%	71%	72%	71%	64%	66%	67%	66%
Third	75%	73%	74%	74%	69%	70%	71%	71%

### Percentage of Students Reading on Grade Level\*



Grade	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Kindergarten	N/A	53%						
First	50%	49%	48%	49%	42%	44%	46%	47%
Second	52%	50%	51%	51%	43%	45%	47%	48%
Third	51%	48%	51%	51%	44%	46%	48%	50%

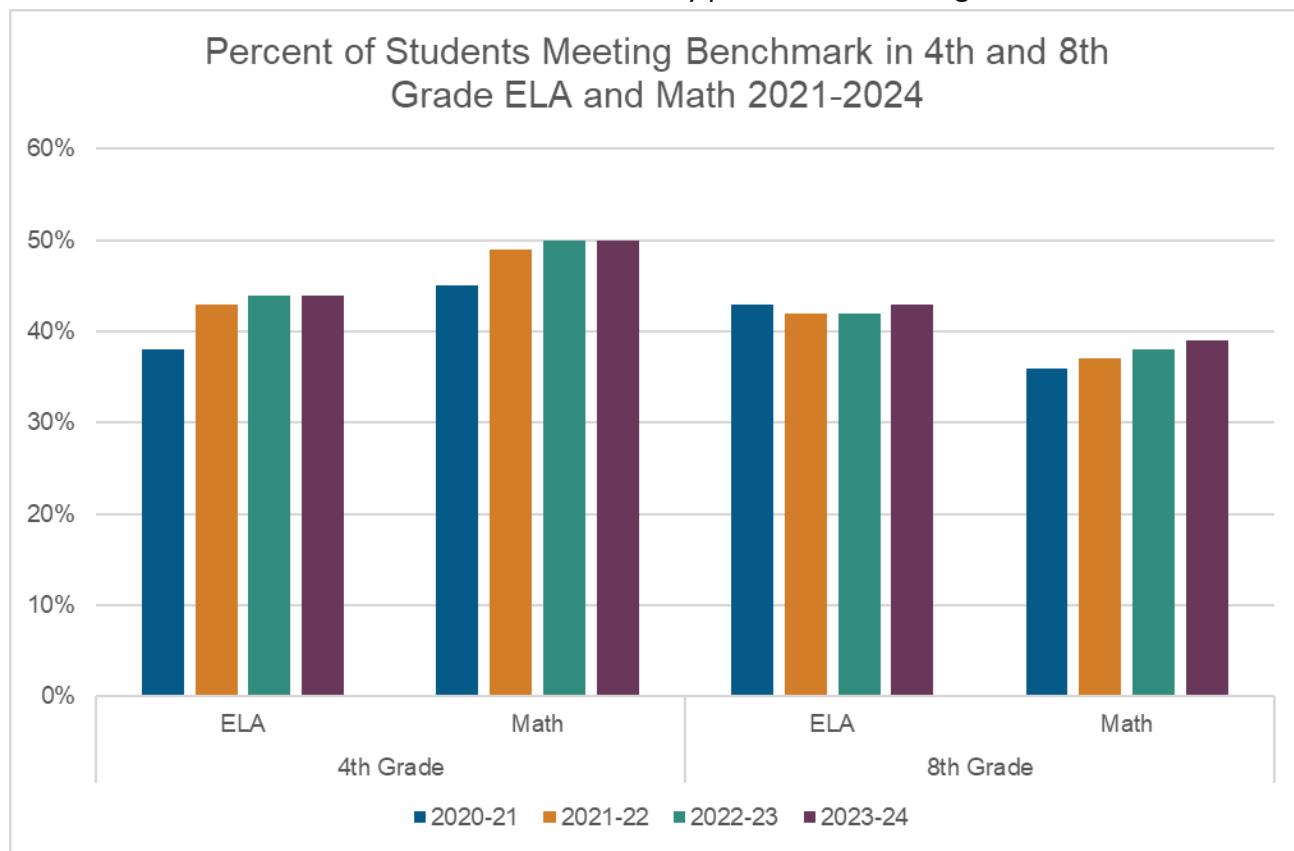
- What are the suggested legislative solutions? Include code references and suggested language where possible:
  - Please see the code changes listed above in question 1.
- Provide details, sources, research, and analysis to which forms evidence-basis for this request or the associated program (e.g, 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:
  - [National Council on Teacher Quality \(NCTQ\) State of the States: Five Policy Levers to Improve Math Instruction](#)
  - [ExcelinEd Mathematics Policy Recommendations](#)
  - [Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science, 2020](#)
  - [Science of Reading: Defining Guide](#)

## FUNDING REQUEST

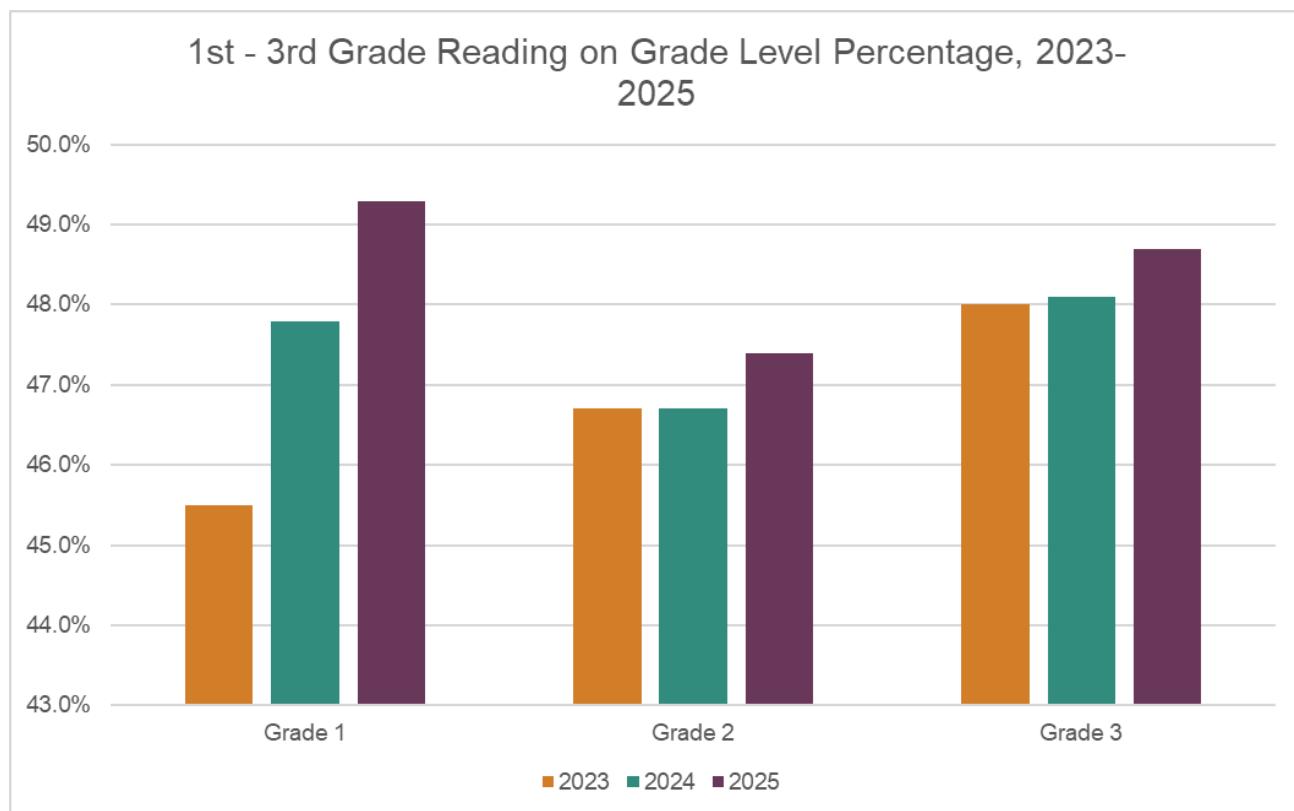
*This section only needs to be completed if you are seeking new or additional funding.*

## Board Action for Request: (Date/Board Item/Committee)

1. Summarize the request, the specific problem it will solve, and how it will solve the problem.
  - Goal:
    - Increase RISE ELA and Math scores in 4th and 8th grade.
    - Increase teacher capacity to provide high-quality instruction in literacy and mathematics to all Utah students in grades K-8.
  - Rational:
    - Average outcomes in RISE ELA and Math indicate that the majority of Utah students are not currently proficient in reading or mathematics.



- As a result of [SB 127 \(GS 2022\)](#), more students in grades 1-3 are reading at their grade level, and we expect this positive trend to continue.
  - Over 9,000 teachers have learned and are using the science of reading instruction.
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- Expansion of this program would extend successes to students in K-8 across both reading and mathematics.
  - Proposed changes represent a strategic effort to create a rigorous K-8 educational system that supports the development of both strong literacy and numeracy skills for all students.
  - Utah would lead the first strategic initiative of this scale across K-8 mathematics and literacy in the nation, providing a unique opportunity for students.
- This will be achieved through:
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  - Comprehensive assessment strategies that allow teachers to better meet the needs of Utah students.

## 2. Amount Requested:

Funding Source	Existing SB 127 Funding & State Benchmark Assessments	Amount Proposed (\$)
FY 2027 one-time funding	N/A	\$34,300,000

FY 2027 ongoing funding	\$9,644,300 (SB127) + \$15,000,000 (Assessment) = \$24,644,300	\$2,400,000 (new) + \$24,644,300 (existing) = \$27,044,300
TOTAL funding requested		\$61,344,300

Project	Requested Funding Type: Ongoing or One-time	Current SB127 Funding	Proposed Additional Funding
Literacy and math coach	Ongoing funding	\$4,800,000 = 32 coaches + 2 USBE specialists + 1 USBE support staff	\$2,400,000 = 16 new coaches, 1 new specialist
Professional Learning in literacy for educators in grades K-3	Ongoing funds	\$4,844,300 (Keep \$200,000 to support PL for K-3 literacy, rest be distributed to additional projects)	No additional funding needed
Professional Learning in literacy for educators in grades 4-8	One time funds		\$5,000,000.00
Professional Learning in mathematics for educators in grades K-8	One time funds		\$12,000,000.00
Reading and Mathematics screening assessment for grades K-8	Ongoing funds on 5 year contracts.	Current funding for reading assessment for grades K-6 (not SB 127 funds): \$13,500,000.00 for a 5 year contract.  Current funding for mathematics	\$12,000,000 for a 5 year contract

		assessment for grades K-3 (not SB 127 funds): <b>\$1,500,000.00</b> for a 5 year contract.	
Change management	One-time funds		\$300,000.00
Writing platform for grades K-8	One-time funds (for a 5 year contract)		<b>\$5,000,000.00</b>

3. Provide an itemized budget, including revenue and expenditure sources, for how the funding will be utilized.

Funding Source(s):

Cost Category	FY 2026 ( <i>Current fiscal year</i> )	FY 2027
Personnel Services	\$	\$
Travel/In State	\$	\$
Travel/Out State	\$	\$
Current Expenses	\$	\$

Data Processing Current Expenses	\$	\$
Data Processing Capital Outlay	\$	\$
Capital Outlay	\$	\$
Other Charges/Pass Through	\$	\$
Transfers	\$	\$
Other	\$	\$
Total	\$	\$
NEW USBE FTEs being requested as part of the funding request	FY 2026 <i>(Current fiscal year)</i>	FY 2027
NEW USBE FTEs	35 being funded with SB 127 funds (32 coaches, 2 USBE specialists, 1 USBE support staff)	17 new FTEs in addition to the current 35 (16 coaches, 1 USBE specialist)

4. To what extent is this request scalable? Articulate the impacts if lower funding amounts were provided for this request.
  - Proposed projects could be scaled up into high school spaces or projects could be scaled down to only include elementary grades, but this would likely result in lesser outcomes.
  
5. What has been done or considered to address this problem with existing resources, instead of requesting additional state funding?
  - The Early Learning Program as it currently exists and has existed for over a decade has not made notable impacts on student outcomes.
  - The Professional Learning Grant funding was utilized previously to support teachers, but that code was repealed during the 2025 session.
  - Minimal supports currently exist for adolescent students that struggle with foundational skills in math and reading and are not meeting grade

level standards if they do not have an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section504 Plan.

6. Summarize the current budget for the project or program that is being funded. If this is a new project or program, summarize resources that are available for like-objectives within USBE.
  - See request above per [SB 127](#) current funding and new request to support literacy and mathematics through grade 8.
7. Does this request create any future funding obligations (operations and maintenance, multi-year scale up, etc)?
  - Yes
8. Describe how the funding case supports the goals and metrics of the [USBE Strategic Plan](#).
  - Supports work in the previous Strategic Plan for each of the goals Early Learning, Effective Educators and Leaders, Safe and Healthy Schools, Personalized Teaching and Learning
  - We look forward to aligning this work with the Board's future goals and strategic plan.
9. What value will additional resources create for Utah? What performance measures for that value will be reported or are already reported?
  - Highly trained teachers will create better outcomes for students.
  - This will be measured using 4th and 8th grade scores on our state standardized Math and Reading assessments.
10. 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).
  - [National Council on Teacher Quality \(NCTQ\) State of the States: Five Policy Levers to Improve Math Instruction](#)
  - [ExcelinEd Mathematics Policy Recommendations](#)
  - [Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science, 2020](#)
  - [Science of Reading: Defining Guide](#)
11. Which populations or geographic areas will benefit most from this request? What safeguards will be implemented to prevent inequities or other unintended distributional consequences as it relates to this request?
  - Benefits will be wide reaching for all geographic areas. Increased teacher knowledge will better equip teachers to meet the needs of students learning English, students with disabilities, and students who are economically disadvantaged.

12. Which stakeholders have you engaged and coordinated with during the development of this request?

- LEA math and literacy leaders
- LEA superintendents and directors
- Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs)
- Governor's Senior Advisor of Education
- Education Philanthropists in Utah
- Superintendent Dr. Molly Hart
- Former Superintendent Dr. Sydnee Dickson
- Board Member Jennie Earl

**Last Step:** When the Legislative Request Form is complete and has been reviewed by your Deputy Superintendent, email Greg Connell, [Greg.Connell@schools.utah.gov](mailto:Greg.Connell@schools.utah.gov) to inform him the request is ready for next steps.