

Agency: UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Request Title: *Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program (BTS Arts)*

Purpose Statement:

This additional funding is essential to, first, sustain our 466 current BTS Arts schools. Second, to expand the program to 23 new schools (list available upon request) that have been waitlisted in FY26 expanding the BTS Arts program to an additional estimated 11,500 K-6 students who will receive high-quality, integrated arts education.

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)

FY 2026 Ongoing Funding = \$19,445,000

FY 2026 One-Time Funding = \$0

Current Funding for FY 2026: Projected Results:

First, this increase in funding is crucial to sustain the 466 current BTS Arts schools. 25 of the 466 schools were funded with one-time funding (\$1,000,000) from the 2024 legislative session. To sustain these schools, the BTS Arts program will need an ongoing allocation of \$900,000, which funds 0.5 FTE at each of the schools (12.5 FTE x \$72,000). Historically, one-time funding allocations have rolled into ongoing funding to sustain the additional schools that applied and were accepted to participate in the BTS Arts program. In the 2025 legislative session, no one-time funding was allocated. The total amount awarded to BTS Arts was reduced by \$1,000,000 in the 2025 Legislative session (\$1,000,000 one-time funding from FY25 was not rolled into the on-going funding during the legislative session). To sustain the schools that joined in FY25, the BTS Arts program has utilized carryforward funds. Without an increase in funding of \$900,000 in FY27, these schools will no longer be funded.

Second, this funding is to expand the program to 23 schools (10 charter, 13 traditional schools) who applied in January 2025 and were waitlisted due to the lack of funding in the legislative session in 2025. To add these schools, BTS Arts will need an ongoing allocation of \$828,000, which funds 0.5 FTE at each of the schools (11.5 FTE x \$72,000). The number of projected schools who will be participating in the program is 489 with the addition of the 23 new participating schools, (which will reach 11,500+ more K-6 students). This program provides high-quality, arts-integrated learning, a proven method for comprehensive education that enriches various content areas and optimizes instructional time.

This expansion of the BTS Arts' proven integration method will boost K-6 student engagement and critical thinking abilities. The BTS Arts program cultivates a stronger foundation for students, leading to measurable gains in reading, math, and science. (See data linked below on question 9)

The total requested increase is \$1,728,000.

Rationale: *(Describe in 1-2 bullet points the “why” behind your request. Why is this action necessary for K-12 education?)*

This funding is essential to sustain the 466 current BTS Arts schools and expand the program to the 23 new schools that have been waitlisted. Below is a detailed breakdown:

- **Past Funding:** In the 2024 legislative session, the BTS Arts program was allocated \$19,445,000 in ongoing funding and an additional \$1,000,000 in one-time funding for the 2025 school year. This one-time funding allowed 25 new schools to be awarded participation in the program. Historically, these one-time allocations have consistently rolled into ongoing funding in subsequent years, ensuring the sustainability of these additional schools.
- **Current Funding Gap:** In the 2025 legislative session, the BTS Arts program received the same ongoing amount of \$19,445,000. It was not allocated any one-time funding or an increase of funding to accommodate the additional schools added. To sustain the schools that applied and were accepted to participate in the 2025 school year, the BTS Arts Program has utilized carryforward funds. To sustain these schools in FY27, the BTS Arts Program will need an ongoing allocation of \$900,000, which funds 0.5 FTE at each of them.
 - The reason the BTS Arts program sometimes has carryforward funds is that projected funding allocations for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are adjusted in the fall after salary verifications. When the actual salary of a BTS Arts educator is lower than the grant amount, or if a school is unable to fill a position, unused funds typically become available as carryforward. The BTS Arts program has strategically used these funds in past years to do mid-year applications and acceptance to new schools. BTS Arts has also used those funds to provide resources directly to students' learning experiences. This year, to maintain the program's operations, 23 schools were waitlisted (10 charter, 13 traditional schools) that had applied and are eager to participate. Any additional funds that are available once the salary verifications are complete will go towards waitlisted schools that are ready to participate mid-year.

- **Future Impact:** Without an increase in ongoing funding in the 2026 legislative session, the 25 schools that joined the program in 2025 will no longer be funded. Additionally, the 23 schools that are currently on the waitlist will remain unfunded, leaving thousands of K-6 students unserved.

If not funded/approved:

If this critical funding request is not approved, the BTS Arts program will not be able to sustain the current participation of all schools, directly impacting our ability to deliver high-quality arts education across Utah:

- **Loss of Current Schools:** First, the 25 schools that joined the program with one-time funding in FY25 will not be funded in FY27. This loss would directly impact thousands of K-6 students who currently benefit from arts integration.
- **Continued Waitlist:** Second, The 23 waitlisted schools will remain unfunded for a second consecutive year. This means overall program expansion will be significantly limited, leaving a large percentage of eligible K-6 students statewide unserved.

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USBE Section: Student Achievement

FUNDING REQUEST

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

1. Summarize the request, the specific problem it will solve, and how it will solve the problem.

The request is for an additional amount of \$1,728,000 on-going funds for the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program (BTS Arts). This funding is crucial for two main purposes: First, to sustain the 466 schools currently participating in the program. Second, to expand the program to an additional 23 schools that are currently on a waitlist.

The challenge is a funding gap that prevents the sustained support of recent program expansion. In 2024, the program received \$1 million in one-time funding, which was used to add 25 new schools. To sustain these schools, the BTS Arts Program will need an ongoing allocation of \$900,000, which funds 0.5 FTE at each of them (12.5 FTE x \$72,000). This one-time funding was not rolled into the ongoing funding in 2025. This created a gap that the program has been temporarily managing with carryforward funds. This is not a sustainable long-term solution. Additionally, 23 more schools are on a waitlist, eager to join but unable to due to insufficient funding. To add these schools to the program there will need an additional allocation of \$828,000, which funds 0.5 FTE at each of them (11.5 x \$72,000).

The requested increase of \$900,000 in ongoing funding will solve this problem by first providing the necessary resources to sustain the 25 schools added in 2024. This will prevent a loss of high-quality arts education for thousands of students. Second, the requested increase of \$828,000 in funding will enable the program to expand to the 23 schools (10 charter, 13 traditional schools) on the waitlist, reaching thousands more K-6 students with a proven method of arts-integrated learning that boosts engagement and academic performance across subjects. The

total requested increase is \$1,728,000 of on-going funds.

2. Amount Requested:

Funding Source	Amount (\$)
FY 2027 one-time funding	
FY 2027 ongoing funding	\$1,728,000 increase
TOTAL funding requested	\$1,728,000 increase

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	Current Allocation: \$19,445,000 \$18,763,259.80 (BTS Arts Teachers) \$681,740.20 current allocation plus \$385,389.80 of carry forward funding means that IHEs receive \$1,067,130.00	Current Allocation: \$19,445,000 \$19,277,870 (BTS Arts Teachers) \$1,067,130.00 (IHEs) New: \$1,728,000 \$900,000 for the 25 schools added in 2024-2025 (12.5 FTEs) \$828,000 (23 Waitlisted Schools, 11.5 FTEs)
Transfers	\$	\$
Other	\$	\$
Total	\$19,445,000	\$21,173,000
NEW USBE FTEs being requested as part of the funding request	FY 2026 <i>(Current fiscal year)</i>	FY 2027
NEW USBE FTEs	0	0

4. To what extent is this request scalable? Articulate the impacts if lower funding amounts were provided for this request.

This request is scalable, as demonstrated by the program's successful growth from 50 to its current 466 schools since its legislative funding inception. However, the impacts of not receiving the full funding amount would be immediate and significant, directly affecting both our current operations and future expansion:

If only \$900,000 is allocated: The program would prioritize sustaining the 25 schools that were funded with one-time money. This would prevent the loss of these schools from the program. However, the 23 waitlisted schools would remain unfunded for a second consecutive year. This would significantly limit the program's ability to expand access to high-quality integrated arts education and delay the overall goal of statewide implementation, leaving thousands of K-6 students unserved.

If only \$828,000 is allocated: The program would again prioritize its currently participating schools. This lower funding amount *would not be sufficient* to sustain all 25 schools that were added in 2024. The program would be forced to reduce its current allocation by about two schools, directly impacting students who are already benefiting from the program. Furthermore, none of the 23 waitlisted schools would be able to participate, as the funding would not be enough to both sustain the current program and expand. This scenario would not only halt program expansion but would also result in a reduction of the program's current reach.

5. What has been done or considered to address this problem with existing resources, instead of requesting additional state funding?

In FY26, BTS Arts staff have already taken significant and proactive steps to address these challenges using our existing resources, demonstrating our commitment to program sustainability:

- **Strategic Use of Carryforward Funds:** In the absence of one-time funding during the 2024-2025 legislative session, the BTS Arts Program has strategically utilized carryforward funds to cover a portion of the Institution of Higher Education (IHE) grant that has historically been awarded. This approach optimizes the flexibility of our reimbursable grant system, allowing

us to maintain essential professional learning and endorsement support for our arts teachers, rather than drawing from teacher salaries which are disbursed monthly. This was the best way to leverage existing funds to minimize immediate program disruption.

- **Fiscally Responsible Allocation of Future Carryforward:** Should any additional carryforward funds become available, BTS Arts will prioritize awarding BTS Arts programming to current waitlisted schools. This ensures that any unexpected available resources are immediately directed towards expanding access to the program in a responsible and impactful manner.
- **Reason for Carryforward funds:** Projected funding allocations for LEAs, which are based on applications and “Intent to Participate” forms submitted by LEAs each spring, are adjusted in the fall after required salary verifications have been submitted by each LEA. Because the actual salary of some BTS Arts educators is actually lower than the grant amount, or some schools are ultimately unable to fill the position, this results in unused funds. This year any unused funds will go towards adding waitlisted schools to the program mid-year.

While these efforts have been crucial for sustaining the program within existing allocations, they represent a temporary measure to bridge a funding gap. Without an increase in funding difficult decisions will need to be made with which schools may have to be dropped from the program. While these efforts have been crucial for sustaining the program within existing allocations, they represent a temporary measure to bridge a funding gap. Without an increase in funding, difficult decisions will need to be made regarding which schools may have to be dropped from the program.

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.**

Current Allocation: \$19,445,000

- \$18,763,259.80 (BTS Arts Teachers)

- \$681,740.20 current allocation plus \$385,389.80 of carry forward funding means that IHEs receive \$1,067,130.00

Notes: Uniform amount cannot duplicate funding received under the educator salary adjustment (ESA).

LEAs pay the salary difference if their teachers' salaries exceed the uniform amount allocated.

7. Does this request create any future funding obligations (operations and maintenance, multi-year scale up, etc)?

Yes, this request creates future funding obligations. Over 95% of the funding is passed directly to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to cover salaries for BTS arts educators. These ongoing financial commitments are a natural part of the program's structure and its continued growth, which this request aims to sustain and expand.

If this request is not approved, the program would face significant reductions. Specifically, the 25 schools added with one-time funding would no longer be supported, and the 23 waitlisted schools (10 charter, 13 traditional schools) would not be able to join the program. This would impact thousands of K-6 students across the state.

8. Describe how the funding case supports the goals and metrics of the [USBE Strategic Plan](#).

Additional resources for the BTS Arts program will create significant and quantifiable value for Utah by ensuring the continuity of a proven program, fostering well-rounded students, enhancing academic performance, and improving school culture.

Goal 1: Early Learning & Academic Achievement

- **Enhancing Academic Achievement:** Research consistently demonstrates that learning in and through the arts increases academic performance. The Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) has found a statistically significant positive relationship between years of BTS Arts implementation and student assessment scores in math, reading, and science. (See data linked below on question 9) This funding will allow us to continue and expand this proven approach, supporting early learning foundations for K-6 students.
- **Expanding Educational Opportunity:** By enabling the addition of 23 new schools (10 charter, 13 traditional schools), BTS Arts will extend high-quality, arts-integrated learning to approximately 11,500 more K-6 students. This expands equitable access to a comprehensive education across the state.

Goal 2: Effective Educators and Leaders

- **Preserving Existing Impact and Strengthening Educator Capacity:** This funding sustains vital professional learning and endorsement support from our endowed university partners, contributing to a highly effective and stable educator workforce.

Goal 3: Safe and Healthy Schools

- **Fostering Positive School Environments:** The program contributes to improved school culture, student engagement, parent participation, attendance, and behavior, as evidenced by our assurance surveys. Continuing and expanding BTS Arts will further cultivate safe and healthy learning environments, supporting student well-being.

9. 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.).

The evidence base for this request and the associated program is primarily drawn from annual assurances that provide program evaluation and growth statistics. Please refer to:

- [BTS Arts Annual Report 2023-2024](#)
- [BTS Arts Annual Report 2021-2022](#)
- [BTS Arts Barriers Research](#)
- [UEPC 2023-2024 BTS Arts Study](#)
- [BTS Arts Research Study 2009-2010](#)

10. 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?

The populations and geographic areas that will benefit most from this request are the K-6 students and educators in schools currently unserved by the program. This includes students in the 23 wait-listed schools (10 charter, 13 traditional public).

These benefits will extend particularly to Title I schools, rural schools, and schools with a higher percentage of low-income or English Language Learner students.

Safeguards implemented to prevent inequities or unintended distributional consequences include:

- Demand-Driven Expansion: Funding is primarily directed to meet the expressed interest and waitlist of schools and LEAs seeking to implement or expand the program.
- Program Quality Assurance: The BTS Arts program operates as a proven and researched method for arts integration, ensuring that all participating schools receive high-quality, impactful instruction.
- Broad Invitation: All LEAs in the state are invited to apply for the program, promoting wide accessibility. The funding request is calibrated to meet anticipated demand responsibly, avoiding over-requesting while still covering expected participation.

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

During the development of this request, we've engaged in extensive coordination with a wide range of stakeholders crucial to the success and impact of the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program (BTS Arts). These include:

- Educational Leadership: All superintendents (through a program survey), several Local Education Agency (LEA) business administrators (representing large, small, and rural districts), and charter representatives have been engaged.
- Academic and Professional Partners: Our seven endowed university partners, who contribute to professional development and research, have been actively involved, along with faculty from Utah Valley University. These endowed universities include Brigham Young University, University of Utah, Utah State University, Utah Tech University, Southern Utah University, Weber State University, and Westminster University.
- Community and Advocacy Organizations: Key private partners such as Art Works for Kids and the Friends of BTS Arts Foundation have been engaged.
- School-Level Stakeholders: The demand for the program is directly evidenced by strong interest from parents, school administration, and teachers.
- Research Partners: The Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) is a key research partner, whose 2024 study forms a core evidence basis for this request.
- Internal USBE Stakeholders: Coordination has also occurred with relevant Utah State Board of Education (USBE) sections and leadership.

Last Step: When the Legislative Request Form is complete and has been reviewed by your Deputy Superintendent, email the following individual(s) to inform them the request is ready for next steps.

Policy Request *and/or* Funding Request: Greg Connell,
Greg.Connell@schools.utah.gov.