

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

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

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

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- USBE Section: Teaching and Learning

Director Reviewer: Dr. Meghan Everette

Nature of Request (Select all that apply):

☐ **Policy Change:** Creating, amending, or repealing Utah State Code.
(Complete Section 4)

☒ **New/Increased Funding:** Seeking new financial resources.
(Complete Section 3)

☐ **Efficiency / Reduction:** Proposing the elimination or reduction of a program, mandate, or funding stream. (Complete Section 3 and/or 4)

Purpose Statement (BLUF - Bottom Line Up Front):

We are requesting \$1,339,200.00 to expand the program to 36 new schools in Alpine, Box Elder, Cache, Canyons, Davis, Iron, Park City, Provo, Weber, American Preparatory Academy schools, Beehive Science & Tech,

Entheos-Kearns Campus, Legacy Preparatory, Lincoln Academy, Mountain West Montessori, Odyssey, Syracuse Arts Academy-South, Thomas Edison-North, Wasatch Peak, and Weber State University Charter that have been waitlisted in over the last two years in FY26/FY27. This will expand the BTS Arts program to an additional estimated 17,000 K-6 students who will receive high-quality, integrated arts education.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

The core issue is that current program resources are fully utilized, leaving insufficient funding to accommodate the substantial number of additional public schools that are highly interested in participating in the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program (BTS Arts). The program is operating at maximum capacity within its existing allocation of \$19,445,000. As a result, a growing backlog of 36 fully qualified public schools—spanning Alpine, Box Elder, Cache, Canyons, Davis, Iron, Park City, Provo, and Weber school districts, alongside American Preparatory Academy schools, Beehive Science & Tech, Entheos-Kearns Campus, Legacy Preparatory, Lincoln Academy, Mountain West Montessori, Odyssey, Syracuse Arts Academy-South, Thomas Edison-North, Wasatch Peak, and Weber State University Charter, have been placed on a waitlist.

These 36 schools formally applied for inclusion in January 2025 and January 2026, demonstrating a strong localized desire from principals, teachers, and parents to implement this arts-integrated instructional model. To sustain current operations and protect existing school lines, BTS Arts staff have already optimized internal resources by reducing Institution of Higher Education (IHE) guaranteed grants, scaling back middle school programming, and utilizing available carryforward balances.

Because existing funds are completely leveraged to support currently active schools, the program cannot expand to meet this high level of statewide interest. Without an ongoing funding increase of \$1,339,200.00 to support the necessary 18.6 cumulative school-level educator FTEs, these 36 waitlisted schools will remain unable to participate. This will leave an estimated 17,000 K-6 students without access to the program.

The Source:

This request comes from multiple sources.

1. The USBE Finance Committee requested that this funding proposal be resubmitted after it ranked as the Utah State Board of Education's second-highest legislative funding priority last year.
2. Schools and LEA's who would like to participate in the BTS Arts program through LEA level and school specific level applications.
3. Core philanthropic advocacy from private organizations, including *Art Works for Kids* and the *Friends of BTS Arts Foundation*.

There have been concerns in past years about carryforward and growth funding which we have worked to address this past year with new arts team leadership.

Projected Results:

An ongoing allocation of \$1,339,200.00 will fund 18.6 cumulative educator FTEs (0.5 FTE at 32 schools, 0.65 FTE at 2 schools, and 0.75 FTE at 2 larger schools) to transition 36 waitlisted schools into active participation. This expansion will bring the total number of participating schools statewide to 496, reaching an estimated 17,000 more K-6 students with high-quality, arts-integrated learning that enriches various content areas and optimizes instructional time.

1. This expansion of the BTS Arts' proven integration method will support measurable gains found in a Y2 independent analysis that students who participate in the BTS Arts program perform measurably better on standardized tests. These results indicated a difference of:
 - a. English: 1.1% - 4.3%

- b. Math: 3.4% - 7.1%
 - c. Science: 1.4% - 4.7%
- 2. There is also research that indicates a relationship “observed between BTS Arts implementation and student outcomes was that for every year that a school participated in BTS Arts, the school’s average score on math, reading, and science assessments increased between 0.023 and 0.027 standard deviations on the student-level assessment scale. This increase was statistically significant at $p < .001$ but is modest in size.”
- 3. Based on yearly assurances 89% of principals and 85% of educators agree that the program creates concrete opportunities for parents to engage. (2024-25 and 2023-24 Assurance report)
- 4. In a more targeted action research with the University of Utah BTS Arts Endowment with an elementary school that leveraged BTS Arts to improve outcomes:
 - a. Daily student attendance improved by 2.16%, rising to an average of 89.43% compared to 87.27% in the 2024-2025 school year.
 - b. Office referrals dropped by 20% during the 2025-2026 school year compared to the previous year.
 - c. Family engagement saw a 200% average increase over the 2024-2025 school year. The school hosted three evening STEAM events throughout the year, with each event drawing over 300 attendees. Additionally, qualitative data highlighted a noticeable increase in the attendance and engagement of male guardians at these STEAM events.

Based on these research findings and the demonstrated demand from 36 waitlisted schools, we are requesting \$1,339,200 in ongoing funding to provide 18.6 educator FTEs and expand BTS Arts to these schools.

Note on Existing Performance Measures: Progress for this expansion will be evaluated against our established program baselines, which currently mandate that:

1. A minimum of 50 schools are monitored for implementation of the program; and
2. That 100% of participating schools respond to the annual program assurances. The 36 new schools will be fully integrated into this existing oversight framework to ensure accountability.

Consequence of Inaction:

The 36 waitlisted schools across Alpine, Box Elder, Cache, Canyons, Davis, Iron, Park City, Provo, Weber, American Preparatory Academy schools, Beehive Science & Tech, Entheos-Kearns Campus, Legacy Preparatory, Lincoln Academy, Mountain West Montessori, Odyssey, Syracuse Arts Academy-South, Thomas Edison-North, Wasatch Peak, and Weber State University Charter will remain entirely unfunded for a third consecutive year. This leaves an estimated 17,000 eligible K-6 students statewide completely unserved and locked out of a proven, high-quality educational model.

Because this request translates directly to LEA-level salaries for 18.6 educator FTEs, no additional ongoing funding prevents these schools from establishing permanent staffing infrastructure. By denying this expansion, there is a missed opportunity to improve student and school performance, resulting in the following measurable outcomes:

- Limited access to the academic gains that are highlighted through the Y2 and UEPC research
- Unable to leverage the BTS Arts program as a tool for attendance and discipline
- Will not have access to the BTS Arts programs support structure for family and community engagement.

Evidence & Data:

Provide the source, research, or analysis that proves this is the right approach (e.g., cost-benefit analysis, program evaluation, pilot program results).

Y2 Analytics Independent Statistical Analysis (2023-2024 Data): Utilizing propensity score matching to filter out confounding variables (such as school size, race, or gender attributes), this evaluation verified that BTS Arts participation drives a distinct proficiency increase on state RISE assessments over non-participating schools:

- **Math**: +3.4% to +7.1% percentage point increase.
- **Science**: +1.4% to +4.7% percentage point increase.
- **English**: +1.1% to +4.3% percentage point increase.

Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) Longitudinal Study: Confirms a highly significant ($p < .001$) compounding relationship where every year of active BTS Arts implementation adds 0.023 to 0.027 standard deviations to average student performance on core math, reading, and science scales.

USBE Annual Assurance Reports (2024-2025 and 2023-2024): Confirms structural administrative agreement on community impact, with 89% of principals and 85% of educators verifying that the program builds concrete pathways for active parent interaction.

Targeted Action Research Case Studies: University of Utah's Endowed BTS Arts Program: Targeted Action Research Case Studies (Magna STEAM & Glendale Projects): Tracks real-world, localized school culture outcomes resulting from proper program execution:

- **Attendance**: Daily student attendance increased by 2.16%, lifting the baseline average from 87.27% up to 89.43%.
- **Behavior**: Student office discipline referrals dropped by exactly 20% year-over-year.

- **Community Engagement:** Family involvement metrics grew by an average of 200%, marked by consecutive interactive STEAM community events generating over 300 physical attendees each, alongside documented qualitative gains in male guardian presence.

SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

*(Complete **only** if your request involves financial resources or proposing budget cuts)*

Financial Ask:

(If a field does not apply, enter \$0).

- **FY 2027 Ongoing Requested:** \$1,339,200.00
- **FY 2027 One-Time Requested:** \$_____
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** \$_____ *(Amount saved by cutting redundancies or reallocating existing funds)*

The Offset Strategy:

No duplicate or redundant educational funding streams have been identified for cutting. The program has already sustained recent budgetary constraints by restricting overhead operations including shrinking university guaranteed grants, LEA coaches who were retiring, and removing the middle school pilot program to ensure funding current BTS Arts classroom positions.

Future Obligations:

Does this request create multi-year scale-up costs or ongoing maintenance obligations?

☒ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe: Yes, this request establishes permanent, multi-year additional funding. 100% of the ongoing \$1,339,200.00 request is distributed straight to LEAs to pay permanent teacher salaries. These long-term funding obligations match the program's structural format, where state funds secure stable local personnel lines.

Itemized Budget Request:

(Please detail how the funding will be utilized across the following categories).

	FY 2027 (Current)	FY 2028 (proposed)
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$18,478,764.00 (LEA funding for BTS Arts teachers and coaches) \$960,420.27 (IHE Grants) Total: \$19,445,000.00	\$19,817,964 (LEA funding for BTS Arts teachers and coaches) \$960,420.27 (IHE Grants) Total: \$20,784,200.00

New USBE FTEs Requested: 0

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

NA

If no FTEs are required, explain.

We currently have the Arts and Wellness Coordinator and the BTS Arts Specialist who support this program. We did have the program specialist position switch roles recently but we are shifting work to absorb those responsibilities.

Performance Measures:

The Legislature requires clear, data-driven metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of newly funded programs. Please suggest 1 to 2 specific, measurable outcomes that can be used to track the success of this funding item if it is approved.

When brainstorming your measures, consider:

- *What specific outcomes data point will change because of this funding?*
- *How will the agency or the Legislature objectively know if this program was successful after year one?*

(Examples: "Increase the number of trained special education paraprofessionals by 20% statewide," "Decrease average LEA application processing time from 30 days to 14 days," or "Improve early literacy scores among participating schools by X%.")

Increased Arts Learning Performance Measure

Achieve an annual minimum threshold of 85% among reporting school principals and BTS Arts educators affirming via annual BTS Arts Assurances that participating K–6 students demonstrate proficiency in the Utah Fine Arts Core Standards.

AND

Option A: Track and evaluate the percentage of 9th–12th grade students with prior K–6 BTS Arts participation who enroll in Advanced Arts courses (AP, IB, or CE) to measure long-term program impact and inform future expansion decisions.

OR

Option B: Assess 9th–12th grade Arts course participation among BTS Arts elementary alumni to determine baseline pipeline growth and identify opportunities for secondary program alignment.

Academic Performance Measure

Achieve an average annual proficiency growth rate on state RISE assessments (Math, Science, and English) among grant-recipient schools that exceeds the statewide average growth rate of non-recipient schools over the first three years of participating.