

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Early Literacy Statutory Changes and Funding Request

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

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- USBE Section: Teaching and Learning

Director Reviewer: 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 statutory amendments to clarify and align code passed in S.B. 241 (2026 General Session), repeal unfunded mandates in S.B. 127 (2022 General Session), establish a graduated TSSA funding alignment timeline for low-performing schools, and authorize up to 5% (\$750,000

ongoing) in administrative funds from the existing \$15,000,000 early literacy program to support state monitoring, 1 FTE specialist, and implementation oversight

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

The Problem:

1. S.B. 241 (2026) Operational Gaps: S.B. 241 established critical science of reading mandates, but USBE requires technical statutory refinements to resolve LEA confusion regarding definitions, timelines, and intervention settings. Furthermore, USBE lacks dedicated administrative funding to perform mandatory statewide monitoring, curriculum reviews, and site visits.

2. Unfunded S.B. 127 (2022) Statutory Mandates: Statutory requirements from S.B. 127 remain in code (e.g., community engagement and change management programs) despite legislative funding being removed or redirected, creating structural compliance misalignment.

The Source:

This request is a direct continuation of the early literacy policy request prioritized by the Board during the 2026 Legislative Session and serves as a vital follow-up to S.B. 241 (2026), which USBE staff and the Board have been actively implementing over recent months.

Additionally, this request incorporates explicit direction from the Board's Finance Committee during its June 2026 meeting, instructing staff to draft a statutory policy change establishing a graduated, escalating timeline for LEAs to dedicate Teacher and Student Success Act (TSSA) funds toward evidence-based reading interventions in low-performing schools.

Projected Results:

Primary Target: Ensure 80% of Utah third-grade students are reading at or above grade level on benchmark assessments by July 2030.

Systemic Outcome: Align state and local resources (including TSSA funds), resolve LEA implementation confusion, and ensure rigorous, data-driven reading interventions statewide.

Consequence of Inaction:

Unfunded Mandates: USBE will remain legally obligated under S.B. 127 to provide statutory programs for which no funding exists.

Implementation Failure: LEAs will face ongoing ambiguity regarding S.B. 241 requirements, leading to inconsistent classroom practice, misapplied intervention settings, and delayed progress toward state literacy goals.

Evidence & Data:

- [Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science, 2020](#)
- [Science of Reading: Defining Guide](#)
- [Phases of Development in Learning to Read and Spell](#)
- [Why the 3 Cueing System Model Doesn't Teach Students to Read](#)
- [Is retell a valid measure of comprehension?](#)
- [Don't confuse Reading Comprehension and Learning to Read](#)

SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

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

Financial Ask: up to 5% of the \$15,000,000 of current ongoing funding for administrative funds to support literacy improvement and implementation.

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

- **FY 2027 Ongoing Requested:** \$750,000 (Authorized as up to 5% administrative set-aside from the \$15,000,000 ongoing literacy allocation in S.B. 241)
- **FY 2027 One-Time Requested:** \$0
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** \$0 *(Amount saved by cutting redundancies or reallocating existing funds)*

The Offset Strategy:

If you are requesting new funds, what duplicate programs, ineffective streams, or outdated mandates could be cut or reallocated to fund this? Please name the specific programs/funds.

N/A

Future Obligations:

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

X Yes

[] No

If yes, please describe: The current funding for SB 241 is ongoing and the 5% of administrative funds would also be ongoing funding.

Itemized Budget Request:

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

	FY 2027 (Current)	FY 2028 (proposed)
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$ 750,000 (up to)	\$ 750,000 (up to)

Itemized Administrative Budget (\$750,000 Ongoing Cap):

- **Educational Specialist FTE (53E-6-302):** \$160,000 ongoing
 - Dedicated Science of Reading specialist to coordinate higher education teacher preparation alignment, accreditation monitoring, and LEA support.
- **Curriculum & Intervention Reviews (53G-10-806):** \$50,000 ongoing
- **Panel & Monitoring Onsite Travel (53E-3-1003 & 53G-10-805):** \$50,000 ongoing
 - **Conduct required statewide school visits and implementation fidelity audits.**
- **Resource Creation & Professional Learning (53E-3-1001):** \$175,000 (\$150k initial / \$25k ongoing)
 - **Science of reading tools for teachers, coaches, paraprofessionals, and parents.**
- **Science of Reading Panel Expenses & Recognition (53E-3-1001 / 1003):** \$30,000 ongoing

- **Community & Parent Literacy Engagement (53E-3-1004):** \$50,000 ongoing
- **Books for Kids / Home Literacy Support:** Remaining balance allocated toward home literacy materials.

New USBE FTEs Requested: 1

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

Current staff cannot absorb these extensive statutory monitoring, accreditation, and technical assistance duties. Previous FTE funding under S.B. 127 was redirected to LEAs while agency monitoring workloads increased under S.B. 241.

Item Description	Code language	Amount	One-time/ ongoing
Educational Specialist	53E-6-302 The Utah Board of Higher Education and the state board shall each designate an employee of each board's staff to jointly: (a)work with education deans of state institutions of higher education to coordinate university teacher preparation programs that may include: (i)monitoring courses for university teacher preparation programs; and (ii)working with course instructors for university teacher preparation programs; (b)act as a liaison between: (i)the Utah Board of Higher Education; (ii)the state board; (iii)local school boards or charter school governing boards; and	\$160,000	ongoing

	(iv)representatives of university teacher preparation programs; and (c)report the employee's findings and recommendations for the improvement of teacher preparation programs to: (i)the state board; and (ii)education deans of state institutions of higher education. (5)The state board, in consultation with the Utah Board of Higher Education, shall: (a)in good faith, consider the findings and recommendations described in Subsection (4)(c); and (b)in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, make rules, as the state board determines is necessary, to implement recommendations described in Subsection (4)(c). (7)The Utah Board of Higher Education and the state board shall jointly: (a)monitor accreditation of university programs regarding the science of reading preparation described in Subsection (3)(b); and (b)(i)develop strategies to provide support for preparation programs with low rates of passage on the required literacy preparation assessment; and (ii)provide increasing levels of support to a preparation program with low rates of passage on the required literacy preparation assessment for two consecutive years.		
Resource creation for	53E-3-1001 analyze, align, and target resources,	one-time: \$150,000	one-time and

paraprofessional, teachers, coaches, administrators, and parents	including digital software and tools, in existing state programs and the programs enacted in Laws of Utah 2022, Chapter 285, as appropriate, to support early literacy within the state	ongoing: \$25,000	ongoing
Science of reading awards and recognition events	53E-3-1001 identify opportunities to incentivize and support LEAs and elementary schools to analyze data, align plans, and target resources from existing local and LEA programs to support early literacy within the state, resulting in a comprehensive statewide alignment	\$25,000 awards night \$5,000 awards	ongoing
Science of reading panel travel expenses	53E-3-1003 may receive per diem and reimbursement for travel expenses that the panel member incurs as a panel member at the rates that the Division of Finance	\$20,000	ongoing
Panel/Staff Travel for onsite school visits	53E-3-1003 The state board may collaborate with panel members to conduct periodic reviews of: (a) student outcome data; (b) science of reading and science of reading instruction implementation fidelity in public schools and educator preparation programs through onsite visits	\$20,000	ongoing
Staff travel for monitoring visits	53G-10-805 The following shall provide the monitoring described in Subsection (1): (a) for a school district, the local governing board; (b) for a charter school, the charter school's authorizer; and (c) for all public schools, the state board.	\$10,000	ongoing
Curriculum reviews	53G-10-806 Each LEA shall adopt science of reading	\$50,000	ongoing

	curriculum and intervention programs as advised by the science of reading panel described in Section 53E-3-1003 and in accordance with this part. (2)An LEA may not include a three-cueing model in any curriculum or pedagogical practice except in relation to an individual student for whom an IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan explicitly indicates that the three-cueing approach is appropriate for the student's learning needs		
Community engagement (if not repealed)	53E-3-1004 The state board shall contract with one or more organizations that have expertise in coordinating community resources to: provide training and coaching to community, school, and parent engagement coordinators;	\$50,000	ongoing
Books for kids (if not repealed)	The state board shall: partner with a private business or nonprofit organization to annually provide personal, home-use, age-appropriate printed books or digital books with accompanying electronic reading devices to students	\$915,000 (this is how much it has been per year)	ongoing

If no FTEs are required, explain.

Performance Measures:

Increase the percentage of Utah 3rd-grade students reading at or above benchmark on Acadience Reading to 80% by July 2030.

Achieve 100% compliance among LEAs in adopting approved Science of Reading core curricula and eliminating three-cueing instruction practices.

SECTION 4: POLICY & STATUTE

(Complete only if your request involves changing or eliminating Utah State Code)

Code Sections Affected: *(List specific state code references, or write "New Code")*

[SB 127](#) (GS 2022)

- [53E-3-1004](#) Community Engagement for Early Literacy
- [53G-11-305](#) Professional Learning in Change Management
- [53E-3-1001](#) Statewide Goal, Emphasis on Early Literacy

[SB 241](#) (GS 2026)

- [53F-2-424](#) Literacy Interventions
- [53G-10-801](#) Definitions
- [53G-10-802](#) Individualized Reading Plans
- [53G-10-803](#) Scaled Reading Interventions
- [53G-10-806](#) Science of Reading Curriculum

Suggested Legislative Solution: *What specific language needs to be added, amended, or repealed?*

Code Section	Code Title	Current Language	Changes and/or Proposed language

53E-3-1004	Community Engagement for Early Literacy		Repeal whole code
53G-11-305	Professional Learning in Change Management		Repeal whole code
53E-3-1001	Statewide Goal, Emphasis on Early Literacy	(2) identify opportunities to incentivize and support LEAs and elementary schools to analyze data, align plans, and target resources from existing local and LEA programs to support early literacy within the state, resulting in a comprehensive statewide alignment of early literacy plans.	(2) identify opportunities to incentivize and support LEAs and elementary schools to analyze data, align plans, and target resources from existing local and LEA programs to support early literacy within the state. <i>*LEAs are no longer required to complete an early literacy plan.</i>
53F-2-424	Literacy Interventions	Leave as is	Add the ability to utilize 5% as Administrative Funds
53G-10-801	Definitions	(6)(b)"Reading intervention" includes: (i)dyad reading in which two individuals,	(b)"Reading intervention" includes: (i)dyad reading in which two individuals;

		typically a skilled reader and a developing reader, sit side-by-side and read the same text aloud together; (ii)decoding text in which an individual translates printed letters and words into speech through phonics; (iii)a targeted literacy skill intervention resource that is aligned with the science of reading; (iv)a word list; (v)phoneme and grapheme mapping; (vi)handwriting practice; (vii)reading protocols; (viii)retelling; (ix)vocabulary practice; (x)retention in the student's current grade level; and (xi)other strategies that are aligned with the science of	typically a skilled reader and a developing reader, sit side-by-side and read the same text aloud together; (ii)decoding text in which an individual translates printed letters and words into speech through phonics; (iii)a targeted literacy skill intervention resource that is aligned with the science of reading; (iv)a word list; (v)phoneme and grapheme mapping; (vi)handwriting practice; (vii)reading protocols; (viii)retelling; (ix)vocabulary practice; (x)retention in the student's current grade level; and (xi)other strategies that are aligned with the science of
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		reading to meet student needs in improving literacy. (4)(a)"Intervention setting" means the setting in which a student receives a reading intervention. (b)"Intervention setting" includes: (i)a teacher leading an intervention during regular classroom work; (ii)a paraprofessional leading an intervention; (iii)an after-school or extended-day program; (iv)a summer school program; (v)an at-home activity; and (vi)an online activity. (9)"Retention" means a reading intervention through which a	reading to meet student needs in improving literacy. (4)(a)"Intervention setting" means the setting in which a student receives a reading intervention. (b)"Intervention setting" includes: (i)a teacher leading an intervention during regular classroom work; (ii)a paraprofessional leading an intervention; (iii)an after-school or extended-day program; (iv)a summer school program led by a science of reading trained educator; (v)an at-home activity; and (vi)an online activity. (9)"Retention" means a reading intervention through which a
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		student who does not meet a specific reading benchmark or satisfy a good cause exemption repeats the grade in the subsequent school year to provide the student with additional time and intensive, targeted reading intervention to remediate a learning deficiency before advancing to a grade for which the student is not prepared to succeed academically.	student who does not meet a specific reading benchmark or satisfy a good cause exemption repeats the grade in the subsequent school year to provide the student with additional time and intensive, Targeted customized supports in reading intervention to remediate a learning deficiency before advancing to a grade for which the student is not prepared to succeed academically. Add: "Formal Professional Learning" means a professional learning that aligns with the Utah Professional Learning Standards, 53G-11-303, includes job-embedded coaching and is at least 40 hours in length.
53G-10-802	Individualized Reading Plans	(i)within 45 days after the day on which the LEA	(i)within 45 calendar days after the day on which the LEA

		provides the first notice described in Subsection (1)(a) during a given school year, meet and jointly establish an individualized reading plan for the student that includes: (5) An LEA shall assign a student with an individualized reading plan under this section to a teacher who has completed or is in the process of completing formal training in the science of reading	provides the first notice described in Subsection (1)(a) during a given school year, meet and jointly establish an individualized reading plan for the student that includes: (5) An LEA shall assign a student with an individualized reading plan under this section to a teacher who has completed or is in the process of completing formal training professional learning in the science of reading
53G-10-803	Scaled Reading Interventions	(2)(a)(iv) before the 2029-2030 academic year, a student in grade 3 who does not score at or above benchmark on the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment.	(2)(a)(iv) before the 2029-2030 academic year, a student in grade 3 who does not score at or above scores well below benchmark on the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment. (A) Began grade 3 below benchmark on the benchmark reading

			assessment; or (B) Has already had an individualized reading plan before the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment and does not demonstrate above typical academic progress on the benchmark reading assessment; and
53G-10-806	Science of Reading Curriculum	(2) An LEA may not include a three-cueing model in any curriculum or pedagogical practice except in relation to an individual student for whom an IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan explicitly indicates that the three-cueing approach is appropriate for the student's learning needs	(2) An LEA may not include a three-cueing model in any curriculum or pedagogical practice except in relation to an individual student for whom an IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan explicitly indicates that the three-cueing approach is appropriate for the student's learning needs

53G-7-1304(2)(e)	Teacher and Student Success Program	Graduated TSSA Reading Intervention Allocation Timeline	Insert new statutory subsection governing Teacher and Student Success Act (TSSA) fund expenditures: "() Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, a school that falls below the designated annual student proficiency benchmarks shall dedicate 50% of its TSSA plan funds to evidence-based reading interventions, measured by the following escalating benchmark targets: (a) fewer than 60% of third grade students reading on grade level based on the finalized 2025-2026 Acadience Reading data for the 2027-2028 school year; (b) fewer than 70% of third grade students reading on grade level based on the finalized 2026-2027 Acadience Reading data for the
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			2028-2029 school year; and (c) fewer than 80% of third grade students reading on grade level based on the finalized 2027-2028 Acadience Reading data by the 2029-2030 school year."
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Safeguards: *Does this policy change or program reduction create unintended consequences for specific geographic areas or student populations? How will those be mitigated?*

No