

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: USBE Program Evaluation Specialists Critical FTE

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

- Name: Elisse Newey
- Email: elisse.newey@schools.utah.gov
- USBE Section: Policy

Director Reviewer: Leah Voorhies

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 \$300,000 in ongoing funding to hire two (2) Specialist-Level Program Evaluators to establish USBE's dedicated agency infrastructure for rigorous, data-driven program evaluation. These positions will directly operationalize the statewide evaluation standards enacted under

S.B. 324 (2026) and UCA 63G-6b-402. Funding this request guarantees that taxpayer dollars are directed strictly to programs that demonstrate verified, empirical impact on student outcomes aligned with USBE strategic priorities and legislative intent.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

The Problem:

Every year, major education initiatives and pilot programs are enacted with mandatory implementation deadlines but zero funding or specialized personnel for empirical evaluation. Furthermore, S.B. 324 (2026) and UCA 63G-6b-402 established a rigorous statewide Evaluation Framework requiring formal Pre-Analysis Plans, randomized control trials (RCTs) or quasi-experimental counterfactual designs, strict data privacy protections (UCA 63A-19, FERPA), and independent evaluator oversight. USBE currently lacks the specialized human infrastructure required to build pre-analysis plans, execute advanced statistical modeling, or coordinate joint reviews with GOPB, LFA, and the Office of the Legislative Auditor General (OLAG). Without dedicated evaluators, new legislative mandates risk relying on unacceptable evaluation methods—such as simple pre-post or correlation-only analyses—that fail state framework standards and leave taxpayer investments unvetted.

The Source:

This request originated internally within USBE designed to fulfill statutory directives under S.B. 324 (2026) and address legislative calls for transparent, outcome-based fiscal oversight across all public education appropriations.

Projected Results:

Compliance with S.B. 324 Standards: Establish agency-wide technical capacity to author Initial Pre-Analysis Plans (logic models, counterfactual

methodologies, construct validity, target metrics) and oversee Final Pre-Analysis Plans in collaboration with GOPB, LFA, and OLAG.

Methodological Rigor & Causal Attribution: Conduct evaluations utilizing approved RCT or quasi-experimental designs (e.g., propensity score matching, difference-in-differences) to isolate true program effects from external confounding variables.

Identified Fiscal Offsets & Sunsets: Provide objective, data-backed "keep, modify, or sunset" recommendations to legislative appropriations subcommittees, identifying underperforming or redundant programs to safely reallocate millions in public funds.

Consequence of Inaction:

Without dedicated oversight, new mandates operate without the performance data required to verify their impact. This prevents the state from identifying and sunseting underperforming programs, leading to the inefficient use of limited public funds. Without dedicated program evaluators, the state lacks the necessary mechanisms to monitor and track the ROI of educational mandates. This oversight gap creates a fiscal risk, as ineffective programs may continue to be funded indefinitely without empirical support. Establishing this infrastructure is essential to ensuring that taxpayer resources are prioritized for interventions that deliver measurable, high-quality outcomes for students.

Evidence & Data:

Recent legislative history highlights a growing structural gap: major statutory bills create complex mandates but routinely provide \$0 for analytical personnel. For example, no funding was provided for the required

evaluation and management staff in H.B. 312 S6 (2026), S.B. 241 (2026, 5 FTEs needed), H.B. 448 (2026), or S.B. 312 (2026). Even when staffing funds are included—such as S.B. 267 (2026)—funding is often strictly one-time (\$159,000), leaving ongoing evaluation requirements completely unfunded (\$0). Dedicated, ongoing funding for two Specialist-Level Program Evaluators creates a permanent mechanism to meet S.B. 324 quality benchmarks, protect student data under UCA 63A-19, track differential attrition rates, and deliver transparent reporting to GOPB, LFA, and OLAG.

SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

Financial Ask:

- **FY 2028 Ongoing Requested:** \$300,000 (Estimated at \$150,000 per specialist position, inclusive of salary and benefits)
- **FY 2028 One-Time Requested:** \$0
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** Note: The long-term objective of these positions is to **generate millions in future offsets** by identifying failed programs for legislative sunseting

Future Obligations:

☐ Yes

☒ No

Budget Request:

	FY 2027 (Proposed One-Time Supplemental)	FY 2028 (Proposed One-Time or Ongoing)
2 Specialist -Level Program Evaluator FTEs	\$0	\$300,000 (on going)
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$0	\$300,000

FY 2028 Itemized:

Use	Amount
TOTAL	

New USBE FTEs Requested: 2 FTEs

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

No. Current staff are fully leveraged to capacity maintaining baseline statutory duties, regulatory enforcement, and specific program management. Independent evaluation requires dedicated, un-siloed data and policy analysts who have the specific technical skill sets to run longitudinal, value-added control evaluations across multiple school districts.

If no FTEs are required, explain.

Performance Measures:

Measure 1 (Pre-Analysis & Methodological Rigor): Author or approve Initial Pre-Analysis Plans—complying 100% with S.B. 324 / GOPB-LFA

Framework standards (logic models, counterfactual designs, target outcome values)—for a minimum of six (6) major legislatively funded pilots or Board initiatives within the first 12 months of hire.

Measure 2 (ROI & Legislative Sunset Recommendations): Complete longitudinal evaluations featuring approved quasi-experimental or RCT designs, delivering formal "Keep, Modify, or Sunset" policy and fiscal recommendations (including full transparency code and data packages for OLAG review) to legislative appropriations subcommittees to track Return on Investment (ROI).

SECTION 4: POLICY & STATUTE

Suggested Legislative Solution:

While this is a funding request for technical personnel, USBE strongly recommends that future legislative policy align with the governance structure established in S.B. 324 (2026) and UCA 63G-6b-402. Specifically, USBE supports statutory language requiring that any new major educational pilot program automatically incorporate:

1. A mandatory Pre-Analysis Plan validated by GOPB, LFA, and USBE prior to fund disbursement; and
2. An automatic 5-year statutory sunset clause tied directly to the final empirical evaluation findings generated by these funded FTEs.

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:

- Name: Shanda Stenger
- Email: shanda.stenger@schools.utah.gov
- 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 on-going to expand the program to 35 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 be for 18.6 FTE with the majority of schools receiving 0.5 FTE. 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 35 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 35 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 35 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 35 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 35 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 35 new schools will be fully integrated into this existing oversight framework to ensure accountability.

Consequence of Inaction:

The 35 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 2028 Ongoing Requested:** \$1,339,200.00
- **FY 2028 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.

Budget Request:

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

	FY 2028 (Proposed Supplemental One-Time	FY 2028 (Proposed One-Time and/or On-going)
TOTAL REQUESTED		\$1,339,200.00

FY 2028 Itemized:

Use	Amount
Alpine*	\$54,000.00
Box Elder	\$36,000.00
Cache	\$72,000.00
Canyons	\$36,000.00
Davis*	\$226,800.00
Iron	\$82,800.00
Park City	\$108,000.00
Provo	\$72,000.00
Weber	\$72,000.00
American Preparatory Academy*	\$216,000.00
Beehive Science & Tech	\$36,000.00
Entheos-Kearns Campus	\$36,000.00
Legacy Preparatory*	\$54,000.00

Lincoln Academy	\$36,000.00
Mtn West Montessori	\$36,000.00
Odyssey	\$36,000.00
Syracuse AA-South	\$36,000.00
Thomas Edison-North	\$36,000.00
Wasatch Peak	\$36,000.00
WSU Charter	\$21,600.00

** Indicates larger school population*

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.

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Early Math Assessment

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

- Name: Teresa McEntire
- Email: teresa.mcentire@schools.utah.gov
- USBE Section: Assessment

Director Reviewer: Cydnee McCarty

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 \$1,450,000 in ongoing funding to reinstate statewide access to a standardized K-3 early math benchmark assessment and diagnostic screener using a digital platform. This tool allows educators to identify students at risk for early numeracy difficulties and progress-monitor

targeted interventions. Demonstrating immense local demand, 72.2% of Utah LEAs voluntarily opted to continue administering this assessment in SY2027 after the mandatory requirement was removed, with 60.4% choosing to cover the additional costs for digital administration out of local budgets.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

Utah Code 53E-4-307.5 authorizes the State Board of Education to designate a benchmark math assessment for statewide use. However, dedicated state funding for the assessment was removed during the 2026 Legislative Session. Because USBE no longer had state appropriations to support statewide digital administration, the Board was forced to transition the assessment from a required statewide benchmark to an optional LEA-level choice for the 2026–2027 school year.

Without ongoing state funding, the state loses its only consistent early math diagnostic tool. Furthermore, current statute does not mandate that LEAs act upon early math data or provide progress-monitored interventions without funded statewide benchmark infrastructure.

The Source:

This request was formally generated and prioritized by the Utah State Board of Education during the 2026 Legislative Session; however, it was ultimately not picked up or funded by the Legislature. Recognizing the critical nature of early numeracy diagnostics and responding to strong demand from the field, the Board's Finance Committee voted in its May 2026 meeting to direct USBE staff to prepare a renewed funding request for the 2027 General Session.

The necessity of this request is overwhelmingly supported by local educational agencies (LEAs) statewide. Even though the transition to an optional model meant the requirement to administer the early math assessment for SY2027 was removed, 72.2% of Utah LEAs voluntarily elected

to continue administering the early math benchmark assessment. Furthermore, 60.4% of participating LEAs chose to absorb costs to maintain digital administration rather than paper-based testing. This remarkable level of local investment demonstrates that Utah school districts and charter schools view early math screening as an indispensable tool for classroom instruction and student success.

Projected Results:

1. Maintain statewide math assessment coverage across >80% of K-3 public school students, restoring consistent early math performance tracking.
2. Reduce the proportion of students at risk for long-term math difficulties by driving annual increases in students performing at or above benchmark in grades K-3.

Consequence of Inaction:

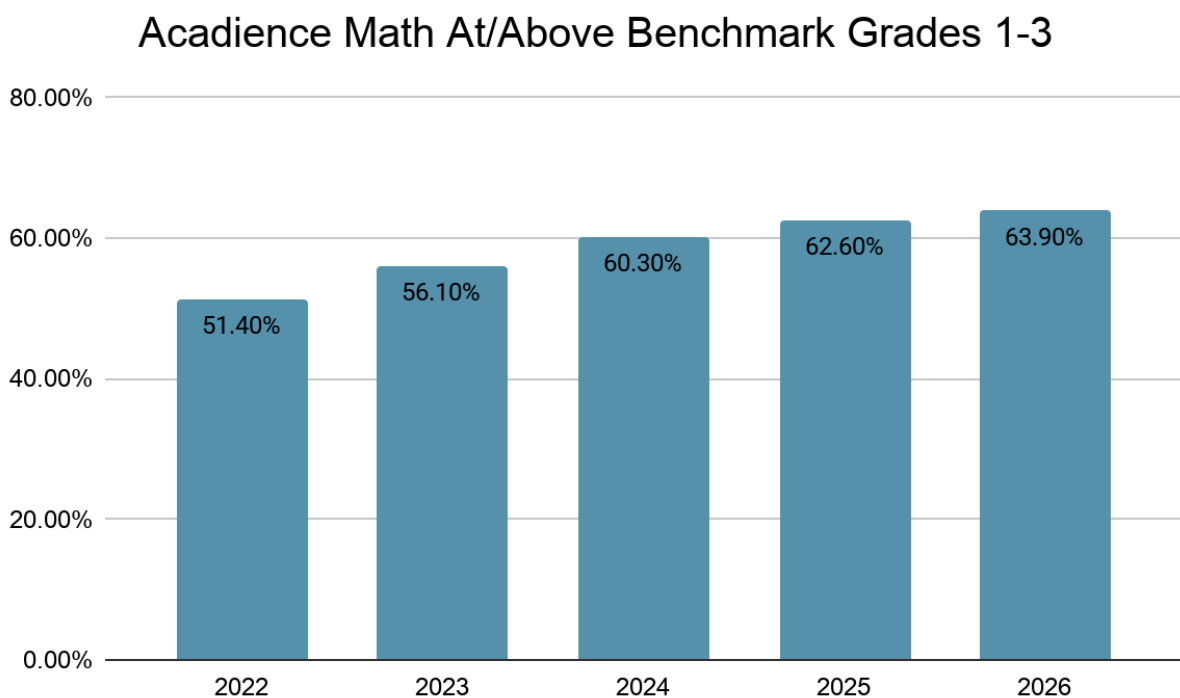
If this request is not funded, Utah will lose its only standardized measure of early numeracy achievement in grades K-3. This is especially detrimental in grades K-2 where no other statewide assessment exists. Statewide data comparability will end, preventing USBE and the Legislature from evaluating early math outcomes or identifying statewide learning gaps. Furthermore, small, rural, and economically disadvantaged LEAs that cannot afford local vendor contracts will be forced to abandon early math screening altogether, widening equity and achievement gaps.

Evidence & Data:

Since the math benchmark has been required, Utah has seen a significant increase in the number of students at or above benchmark, which means that they are less likely to experience math difficulties. The increase shows that teachers are providing better instruction and students are more successful in math. The assessment also allows teachers to track if their math interventions, if implemented, are working and if students are making

progress towards the end of year goal, which has most likely also led to improved student outcomes.

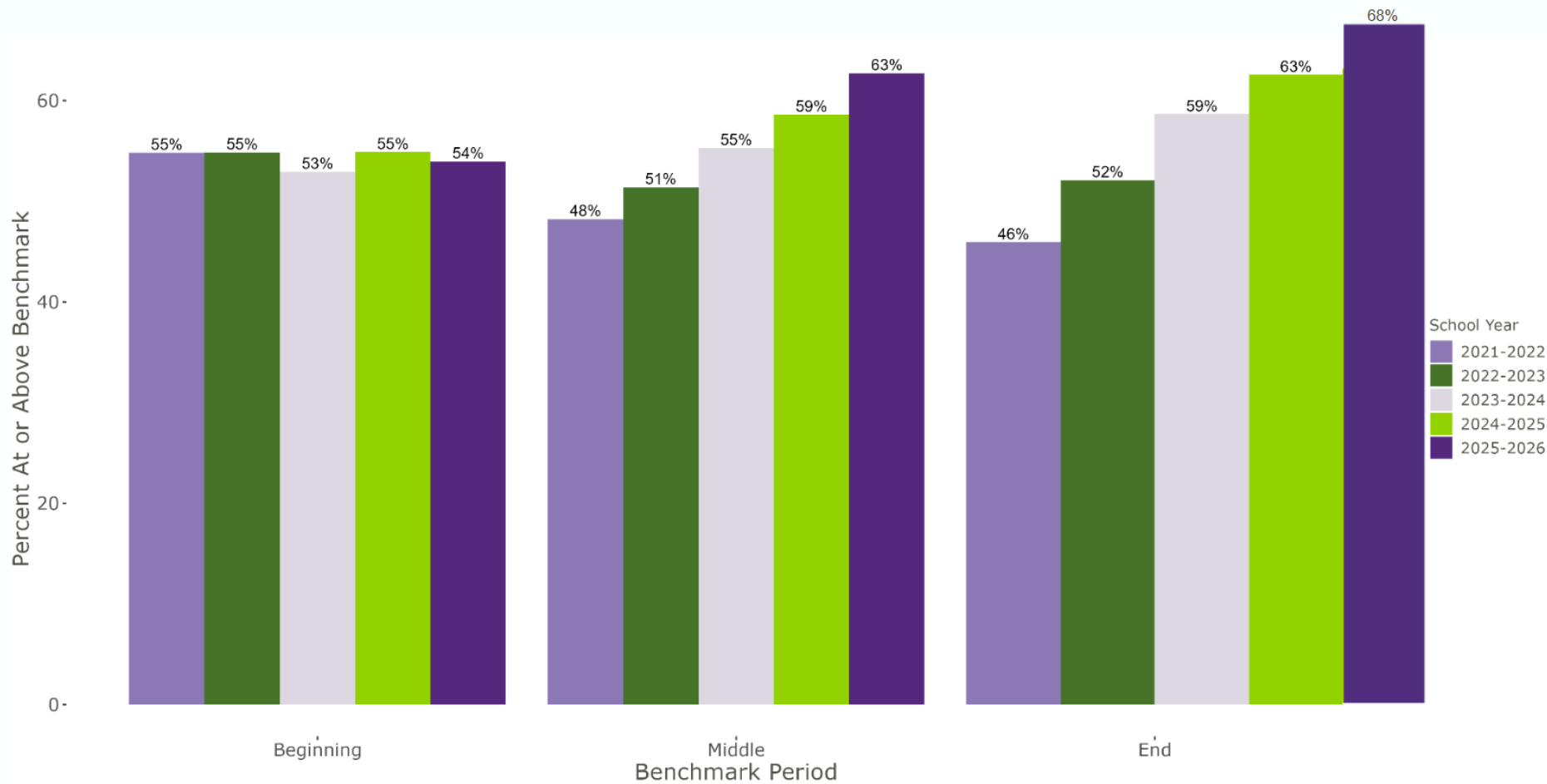
The graph below shows the percent of students in grades 1-3 that were at/above benchmark on Acadience Math from 2022-2026. This means that the percent of students that are likely to experience difficulties in math is decreasing. We continue to see yearly improvement.



The following graphs show the individual grade growth over the last five years. It shows that in each grade students enter the school year at a relatively similar level, but every year show increasing gains by the end of the year.

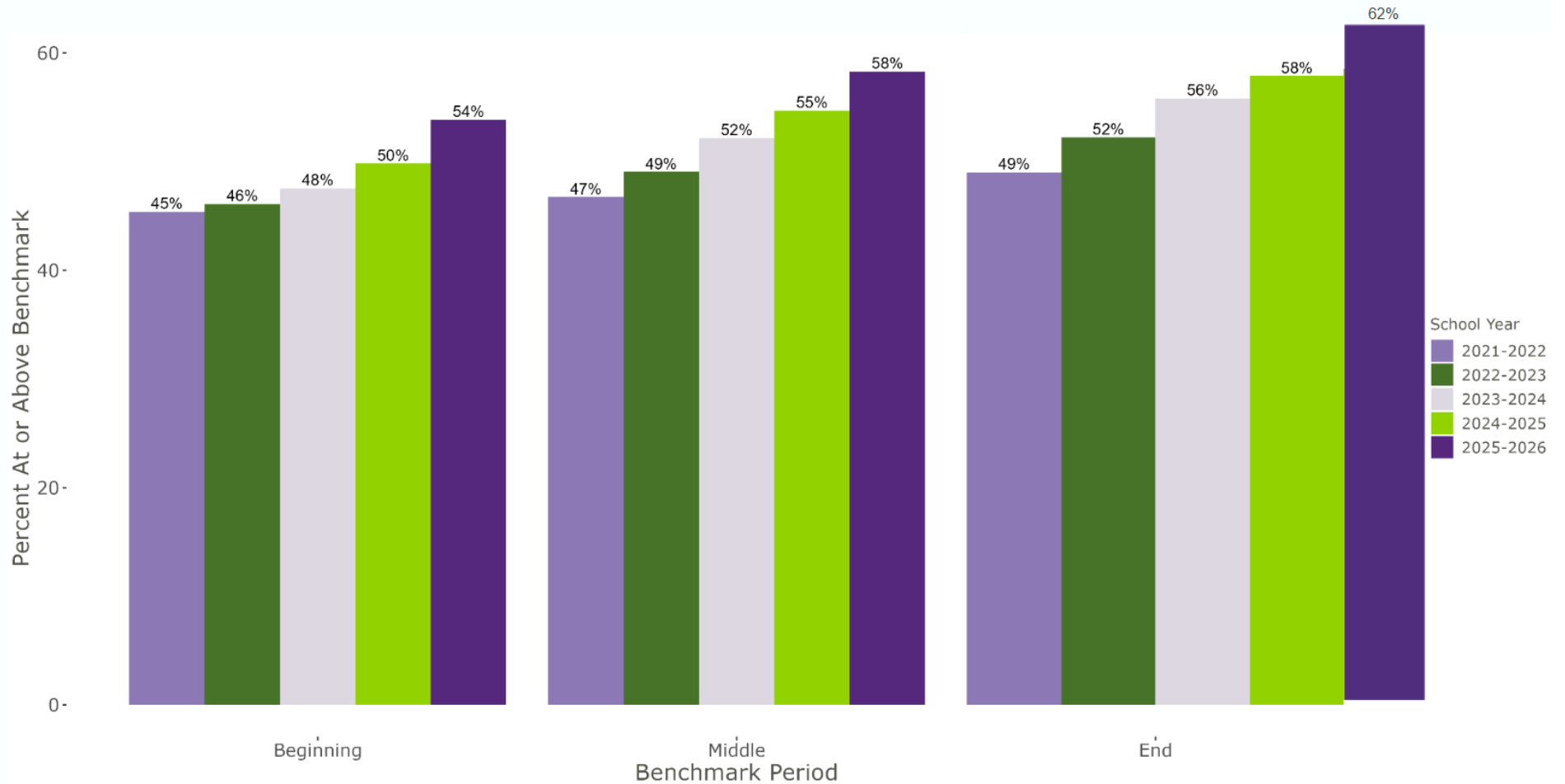
Kindergarten Cross-Year Comparison

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark on the Math Composite Score



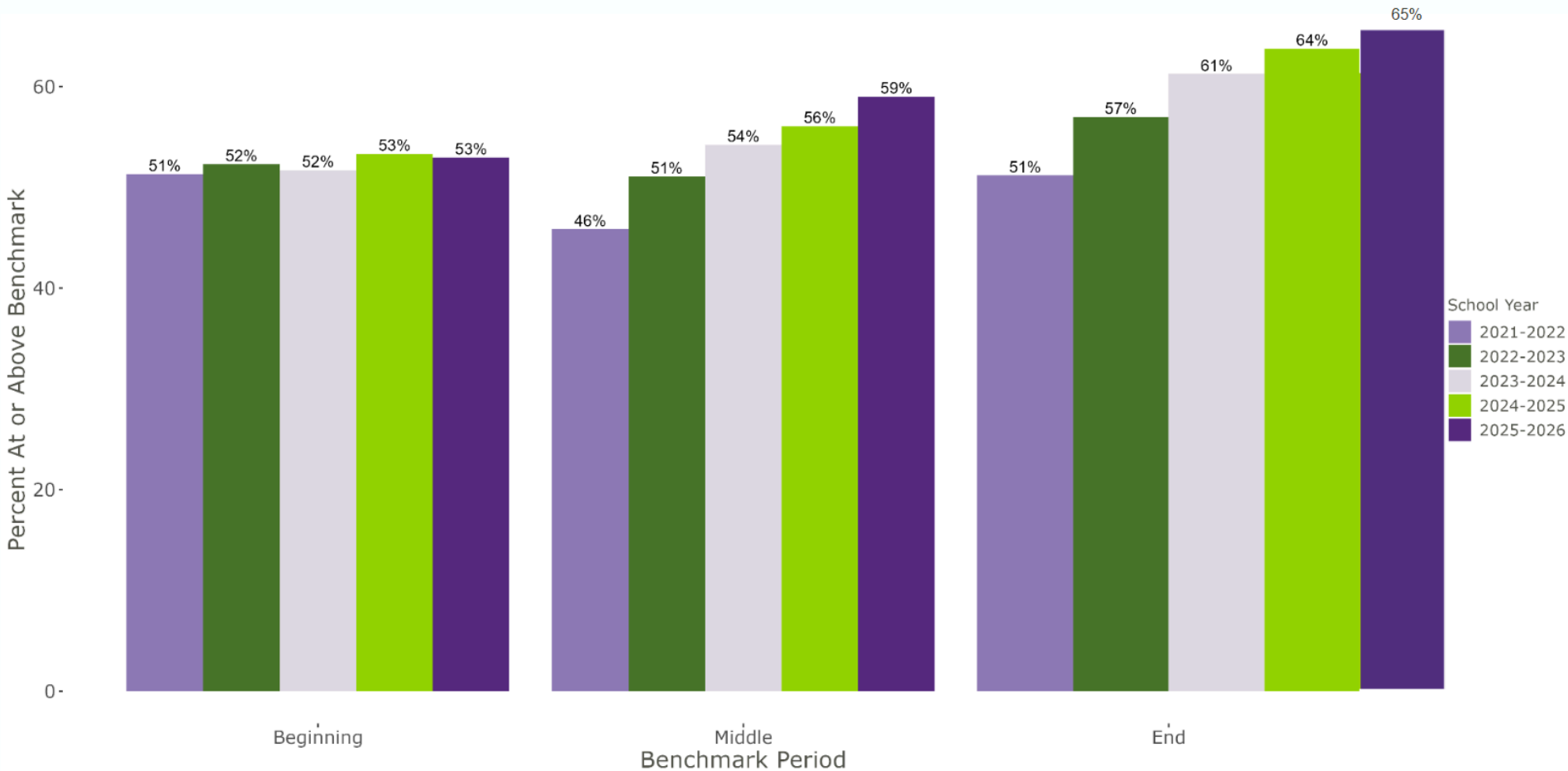
Grade 1 Cross-Year Comparison

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark on the Math Composite Score



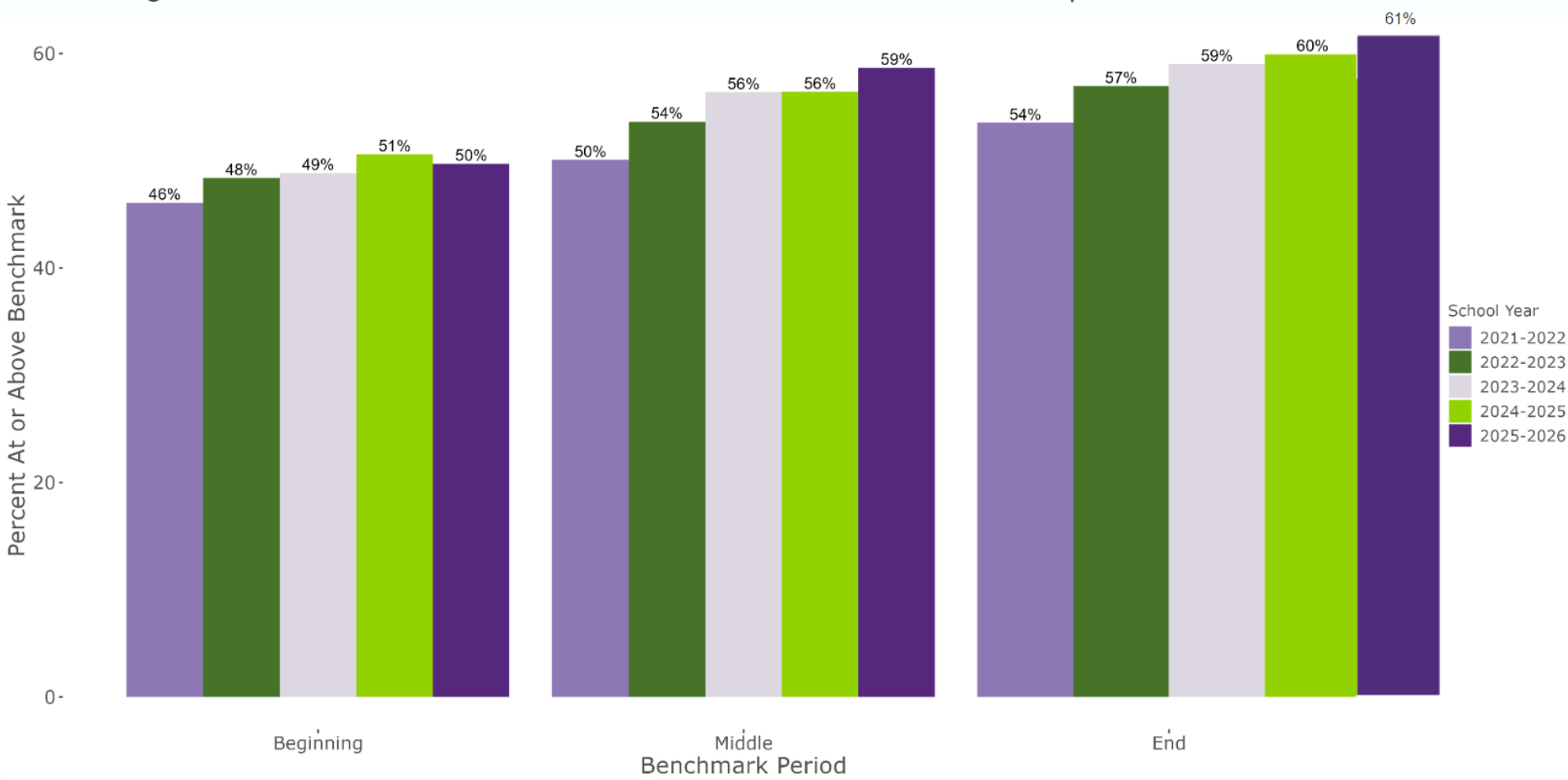
Grade 2 Cross-Year Comparison

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark on the Math Composite Score



Grade 3 Cross-Year Comparison

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark on the Math Composite Score



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 2028 Ongoing Requested:** \$1,450,000
- **FY 2028 One-Time Requested:** \$0
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** \$0 *(Amount saved by cutting redundancies or reallocating existing funds)*

The Offset Strategy:

We did have limited funding of \$300,000 a year for the early math assessment, however that funding was removed in the 2026 legislative session. When the funding was initially requested there was a vendor that offered a product for \$1.50 per student. However, that vendor no longer offers a product at that low cost point and neither do any others. The cost of the assessment in 2025-2026 was \$1,069,600. We were supplementing the additional cost with one time carry forward funds. We do not have the funds to continue to provide an early math assessment on an on-going basis.

Future Obligations:

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

If yes, please describe: _____

Budget Request:

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

	FY 2027 (Proposed One-Time Supplemental)	FY 2028 (Proposed One-Time or Ongoing)
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$	\$1,450,000

FY 2028 Itemized:

Use	Amount
Digital assessment administration portal and reporting platform	\$1,450,000
TOTAL	

New USBE FTEs Requested: 0

If no FTEs are required, explain.

We currently have an employee who has been managing the early math assessment along with other assessment responsibilities. No additional USBE FTEs are needed.

Performance Measures:

1. Increase the percentage of Utah K-3 students performing at or above benchmark on the end-of-year early math assessment by 1.5 percentage points annually over the next 5 years (from a SY2026 baseline).
2. Maintain at least 90% statewide student participation in early math benchmark screening across all participating school districts and charter schools.

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: UPPAC Critical FTE and Attorney Market-Rate Pay Increase Request

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

- Name: LauraLee Gillespie
- Email: lauralee.gillespie@schools.utah.gov
- USBE Section: Law and Professional Practices

Director Reviewer: LauraLee Gillespie

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 \$421,200 in ongoing funding to secure two (2) new full-time staff attorney FTEs (\$355,500) and provide market-rate salary adjustments (\$65,700) for current UPPAC legal counsel. This targeted investment will eliminate an unsustainable 18+ month investigative backlog,

replace expensive temporary stopgaps (such as \$350,000 in outside legal contracts), and ensure the timely, just resolution of educator misconduct allegations.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

The Utah Professional Practices Advisory Commission (UPPAC) is experiencing unprecedented, compounding growth in educator misconduct referrals and open cases. The current base staffing of 3.5 ongoing FTEs is structurally capacity-constrained and unable to keep pace with incoming case volume.

Compounding this operational bottleneck, uncompetitive legal salaries create a severe barrier to recruiting and retaining experienced attorneys. This turnover transforms a staffing deficit into an active public-safety and administrative bottleneck.

The Source:

This request represents a multi-year, staff-generated, and Board-prioritized policy objective spanning seven (7) consecutive legislative sessions. For seven years, the Utah State Board of Education has repeatedly requested dedicated funding from the Legislature to add essential UPPAC staff attorneys and establish competitive, market-rate salaries necessary to retain qualified legal counsel.

State Board members—driven by sustained focus and oversight from the Board's Law and Licensing Committee—have made reforming, accelerating, and improving the UPPAC investigative process a top administrative priority. This 2027 request directly operationalizes the Board's long-standing policy directives, backed by active case-tracking metrics, multi-year caseload growth analysis, and cross-agency salary evaluations comparing state-level legal counsel compensation across Utah government.

Projected Results:

1. Drastically compress wait and processing times for educators and local education agencies (LEAs) facing active misconduct allegations.
2. Safeguard K-12 classrooms by ensuring high-risk misconduct allegations are investigated swiftly and appropriate state-level disciplinary measures are executed without systemic delay.

Consequence of Inaction:

If this request is not funded, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) will face two severe operational consequences:

1. Prolonged Due Process Failure: Educators will continue to face disruptive case wait times exceeding 18 months, leaving teachers and LEAs in administrative limbo.
2. Mandatory Rule Restrictions: USBE will be forced to aggressively amend administrative rules to restrict and reduce the types of misconduct cases eligible for state-level UPPAC review, effectively lowering state oversight standards for public education practices.

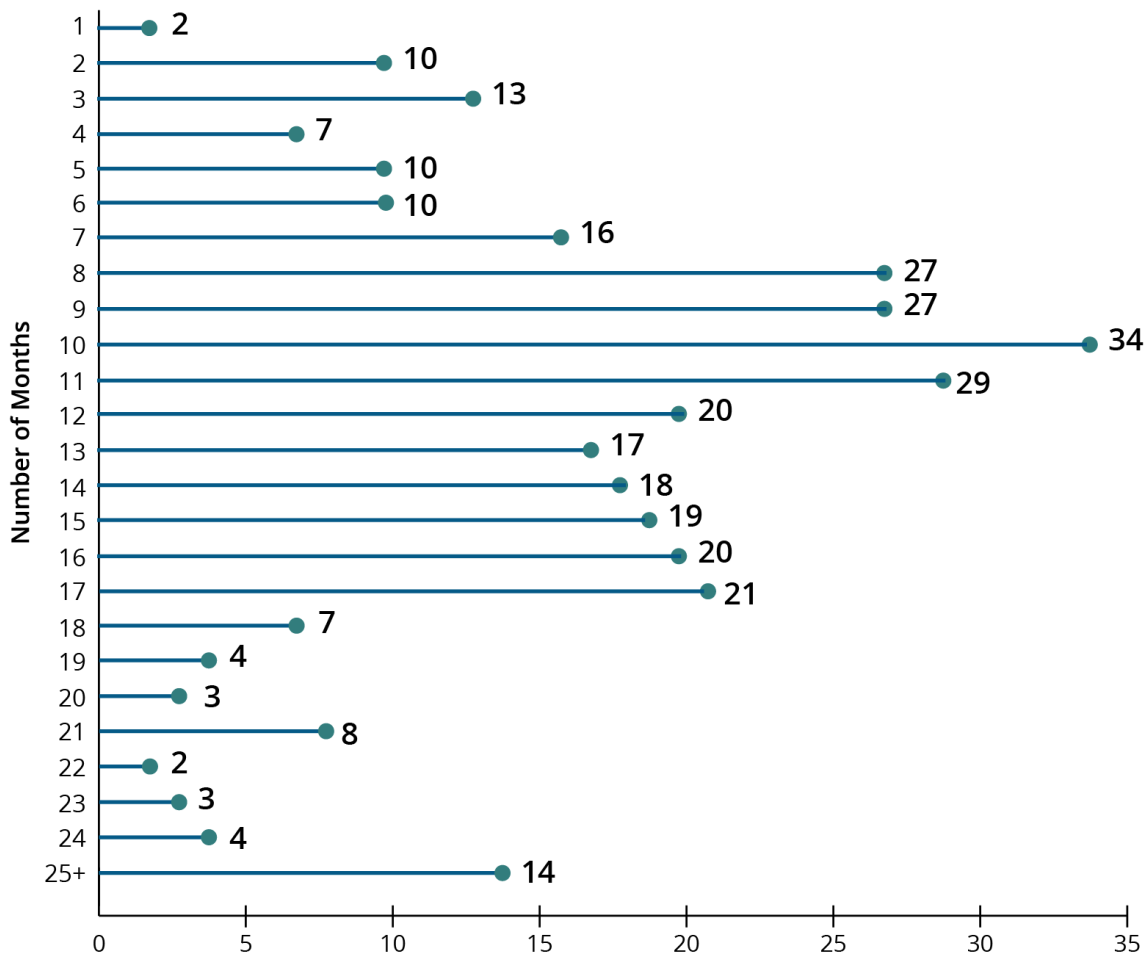
Evidence & Data:

UPPAC case lifespans now exceed acceptable operational thresholds, maintaining a persistent 18+ month delay. To manage this workload, USBE has relied on temporary stopgaps, including using one-time carry-forward funds for 1 temporary investigator FTE and allocating \$350,000 for outside

law firms. These one-time funding patches fail to provide long-term stability or attract permanent talent.

The requested \$421,200 figure includes a 4.2% inflationary modifier applied to prior cost estimates to reflect current labor market conditions for qualified legal personnel.

Months Between Opening an Investigation and Board Decision for Cases Finalized January 2022 - May 2026



SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

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

Financial Ask:

- **FY 2028 Ongoing Requested:** \$421,200
- **FY 2028 One-Time Requested:** \$0
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** \$0*(Amount saved by cutting redundancies or reallocating existing funds)*

The Offset Strategy:

Internal administrative efficiencies have been fully exhausted. USBE has already streamlined operations by enacting expedited rules for minor infractions to reduce attorney workloads. Furthermore, the agency has deployed one-time carry-forward funds and allocated \$350,000 for contracted outside legal counsel to prevent total operational shutdown. Because these stopgaps are financially unsustainable and existing section budgets are operating at full capacity, no further internal reallocations can be made without directly compromising student safety and educator oversight.

Future Obligations:

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

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe: _____

Budget Request:

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

	FY 2027 (Proposed One-Time Supplemental)	FY 2028 (Proposed One-Time or Ongoing)
2 new ongoing attorney FTEs	\$0	\$355,500
Market-Rate Adjustments for current positions	\$0	\$65,700
TOTAL		\$421,200

FY 2028 Itemized:

[illegible]

TOTAL	
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New USBE FTEs Requested: 2 FTEs

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

No. The active pool of 3.5 ongoing FTEs is operating completely over maximum capacity. Spreading these responsibilities any further across existing staff will only worsen the current 18-month case backlog.

Performance Measures:

- Measure 1 (Case Lifespan Reduction): Reduce average UPPAC investigation wait and processing times from 18+ months down to under 9 months by the conclusion of the fiscal year.
- Measure 2 (Clearance Rate Target): Achieve an annualized case clearance rate of 100% (and resolving more historical backlog cases than new incoming referrals) to systematically eliminate the case backlog.

Agency: UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Request Title: *Additional WPU s for the SPED Self-Contained Funding Formula*

Purpose Statement: *This request provides for an additional 1.0 Weighted Pupil Units (WPUs) per student who qualifies for the SPED Self-Contained funding formula, phasing in the costs over five years.*

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:

Dale Frost – USB E Minimum School Program Administrator –
dale.frost@schools.utah.gov

Funding Request:

FY 2028 Ongoing Funding = \$12,600,000 ongoing additional

FY 2028 One-Time Funding = \$0

This request phases in the costs over five years as follows:

Fiscal Year	Additional WPU's for the SPED Self-Contained Funding Formula - 5-Year Phase-In Costs	Additional Costs - Annualized
FY28	\$ 12,600,000	\$ 12,600,000
FY29	\$ 26,300,000	\$ 13,174,000
FY30	\$ 41,000,000	\$ 13,591,000
FY31	\$ 56,900,000	\$ 14,136,000
FY32	\$ 74,000,000	\$ 14,617,000

**\$58,089,400 ongoing - current funding*

***\$70,689,400 - FY 2028 Total Ongoing*

Projected Results:

- LEAs will be able to cover much more of the costs for SPED services for Utah students whose services are the costliest without having to utilize other unrestricted funding sources.

Rationale: The SPED Self-Contained formula currently provides 1.0 WPU's per full-time student who receives more than 180 minutes of SPED services according to the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These are the students in Utah's system that need the most SPED services and, therefore, generate the highest SPED costs. Currently, many LEAs must supplement SPED funding with other unrestricted funds to cover these high SPED costs. With these additional funds, many more of these high-cost SPED services can be covered with SPED funds.

Is there a current funding source that could be reduced or reallocated to fund this request?

No. Not without causing other funding shortfalls in other programs that would negate the benefits of this funding increase.

If not funded/approved: *Many LEAs will need to continue to supplement SPED funding with other unrestricted funds to cover these high SPED costs.*

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

Name: Dale Frost

Email Address: dale.frost@schools.utah.gov

Phone Number: 801-538-7606

USBE Section: School Finance

Additional USBE points of contact (as needed):

Name: Sam Urie

Email Address: sam.urie@schools.utah.gov

Phone Number: 801-538-7545

USBE Section: School Finance

Deputy Superintendent Name: Scott Jones

Email Address: scott.jones@schools.utah.gov

Phone Number: 801-538-7616

USBE Section: Financial Operations

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.

The SPED Self-Contained formula currently provides 1.0 WPU per full-time student who receives more than 180 minutes of SPED services according to the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These are the students in Utah's system that need the most SPED services and, therefore, generate the highest SPED costs. Currently, many LEAs must supplement SPED funding with other unrestricted funds to cover these high SPED costs. With these additional funds, many more of these high-cost SPED services can be covered with SPED funds.

2. Is there a funding source that could be reduced or reallocated to fund this request?

No. Not without causing other funding shortfalls in other programs that would negate the benefits of this funding increase.

3. Amount Requested:

Funding Source	Amount (\$)
FY 2028 one-time funding	\$0
FY 2028 ongoing funding	\$12,600,000 ongoing
TOTAL funding requested	\$12,600,000 ongoing

This request phases in the costs over five years as follows:

Fiscal Year	Additional WPU's for the SPED Self-Contained Funding Formula - 5-Year Phase-In Costs	Additional Costs - Annualized
FY28	\$ 12,600,000	\$ 12,600,000
FY29	\$ 26,300,000	\$ 13,174,000
FY30	\$ 41,000,000	\$ 13,591,000
FY31	\$ 56,900,000	\$ 14,136,000
FY32	\$ 74,000,000	\$ 14,617,000

*\$58,089,400 ongoing - current funding

**\$70,689,400 - FY 2028 Total Ongoing

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

Funding Source(s): Uniform School Fund

Cost Category	FY 2027 <i>(Current fiscal year)</i>	FY 2028
Personnel Services	\$	\$
Travel/In State	\$	\$
Travel/Out State	\$	\$
Current Expenses	\$	\$
Data Processing Current Expenses	\$	\$
Data Processing Capital Outlay	\$	\$
Capital Outlay	\$	\$

Other Charges/Pass Through	\$0	\$12,600,000 ongoing
Transfers	\$	\$
Other	\$	\$
Total	\$0	\$12,600,000 ongoing
NEW USBE FTEs being requested as part of the funding request	FY 2027 <i>(Current fiscal year)</i>	FY 2028
NEW USBE FTEs	0	0

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

This funding request is scalable. However, the lower the amount of new funding provided, the more LEAs will need to continue to supplement SPED funding with other unrestricted funds to cover high SPED costs.

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.

The SPED Self-Contained formula currently provides 1.0 WPUs per full-time student who receives more than 180 minutes of SPED services according to the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). For FY27, the total amount appropriated ongoing from the Uniform School Funding for the SPED Self-Contained program is \$58,089,400.

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

The only additional future funding obligations would be future WPU value increases for these additional SPED Self-Contained WPUs.

- 8. Describe how the funding case supports the goals and metrics of the [USB E Strategic Plan](#).**
- 9. What value will additional resources create for Utah? What performance measures for that value will be reported or are already reported?**
- 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).**
- 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?**

The LEAs that will benefit the most from this request are those that have high percentages of students who qualify for the SPED Self-Contained formula.

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

USBE Legislative Request Form

Draft 2

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

Instructions: Use this form to submit requests for statutory changes, new financial resources, or proposed efficiencies (program cuts/reductions). Please complete **Section 1 and 2**, and then complete **Section 3 and/or 4** depending on the nature of your request.

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

- Name: Darin Nielsen
- Email: darinn@usdb.org
- USBE Section: Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

Deputy Superintendent Reviewer: _____

(Note: You must review this request with your Deputy Superintendent prior to submission).

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):

In 1-2 sentences, state the exact action you are requesting and the anticipated outcome. (e.g., "We are requesting a statutory amendment and \$2M in ongoing funding to create three Mobile Advanced Manufacturing Labs for rural LEAs.")

We are requesting \$2,593,066 in funding to secure materials, equipment, and dedicated personnel required to fully remediate the 2025 audit findings and increase compliance levels with Utah State Board Rules and state law including school safety. This investment will stabilize USDB's financial, data, and risk-management infrastructure without diverting critical resources away from direct K-12 classroom instruction.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

Describe the specific issue, mandate, or inefficiency this request addresses.

This request addresses critical operational and compliance needs identified during two recent audits and subsequent reduction-in-force (RIF) actions at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) in 2025. The audits highlighted key inefficiencies requiring immediate rectification, specifically within data and financial management, strategic planning, policy development, and risk management. Over the past eight months, USDB leadership has utilized existing budgetary resources to address these gaps while evaluating the long-term impacts of the staff reductions. This funding

request is the direct result of that evaluation, targeting specific areas where additional fiscal support is required to successfully mitigate institutional risk and ensure sustainable, efficient operations moving forward.

The Source:

Describe how this idea came to be, what is the support and opposition to this request, with who or what groups did this request originate from?

Origin of the Request

This request originated directly from the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) Administrative Team. It was developed through a internal evaluation following the 2025 organizational audits, policy and law compliance review, and subsequent staff reductions.

Compliance and Alignment Gaps

While triggered by internal reviews, critical components of this fiscal request were designed to close newly identified vulnerabilities in state-level alignment. Specifically, the request addresses gaps between current operational capacities and the mandates outlined in Utah State Board Rule and Utah State Law. Funding will ensure that USDB's data systems, risk management frameworks, and financial operations achieve compliance with statutory obligations.

Support and Opposition

- **Support:** There is strong internal consensus and unified support for this request among USDB leadership, administrative staff, and operational teams who recognize the immediate necessity of stabilizing our infrastructure.
- **Opposition:** There is no known opposition to this request. The proposed adjustments focus entirely on administrative remediation,

compliance mitigation, and operational efficiency, serving the best interest of students, staff, and state oversight bodies alike.

Projected Results:

If approved, what is the measurable outcome in the K-12 system?

(Please list 1-2 specific performance metrics. Link to existing performance measures will be added here).

Measurable Outcome: If approved, this funding will directly protect the K-12 instructional environment by reducing the operational, financial, and compliance risks caused by recent structural down-sizing. It ensures that USDB leadership can maintain seamless, uninterrupted administrative oversight, directly benefiting the specialized K-12 student populations we serve.

Performance Metrics:

1. Audit Resolution Rate: 100% mitigation and closure of high-risk operational and policy gaps identified in the 2025 audits by the end of Fiscal Year 2027/2028.

Consequence of Inaction:

Factually state the impact if this request is NOT approved or funded.

If this request is not funded, the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind will lack the resource capacity to fully remediate the deficiencies identified in the 2025 audits. The specific, factual impacts of inaction include:

- **Operational Over-Extension:** Following the 2025 reductions in force (RIF), existing administrative staff will continue to operate beyond sustainable capacity. This heightens the risk of critical oversight errors in data tracking and financial management.
- **Delayed Strategic Planning:** Without dedicated support, the development of required risk management frameworks and modernized policy updates will be delayed, preventing USDB from establishing a proactive, stabilized operational baseline.
- **Indirect Classroom Impact:** Unresolved administrative and data inefficiencies will eventually create operational bottlenecks, diverting leadership focus away from supporting direct K-12 instructional services and student outcomes.

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).

1. External Audit Mandates and Gap Analysis

The primary source proving this approach is the formal finding documentation from the two 2025 independent/state audits conducted at USDB. These audits served as a comprehensive gap analysis, explicitly identifying structural vulnerabilities in data tracking, financial management, and risk mitigation.

2. Internal Capacity and RIF Impact Evaluation

Over the past eight months, USDB leadership conducted an internal operational capacity analysis to evaluate the effects of the 2025 reductions in

force (RIF). The data demonstrated that while routine day-to-day operations could be maintained, the specialized workload required to build, implement, and oversee new compliance frameworks, policy developments, and modernized data structures exceed current personnel bandwidth. This analysis indicates that external fiscal intervention is required to achieve compliance without degrading direct K-12 instructional services.

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 2028 Ongoing Requested:** \$ 1,440,700
- **FY 2028 One-Time Requested:** \$ 1,153,066
- **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.

Due to the comprehensive 2025 reductions in force (RIF) and subsequent organizational restructuring, the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

(USDB) has already aggressively identified, defunded, and eliminated positions and inefficient operational streams.

Over the past eight months, USDB leadership evaluated all internal accounts and program allocations. Because we have streamlined our infrastructure to its baseline, there are no known duplicate administrative programs or ineffective funding streams remaining.

Any further reduction or reallocation of existing funds would require cutting direct K-12 instructional programs, specialized classroom technology, or essential student therapies (such as speech-language pathology and orientation/mobility services). Doing so would directly compromise USDB's ability to deliver a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under federal and state statutory mandates.

Future Obligations:

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

If yes, please describe: _____

Itemized Budget Request:

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

	FY 2027 (Proposed One-Time Supplemental)	FY 2028 (Proposed Ongoing and/or One-Time)
TOTAL REQUESTED		\$2,593,766

New USBE FTEs Requested: 7 (Enter number of new FTEs)

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

If no FTEs are required, explain.

Following the significant 2025 reductions in force (RIF), USDB's existing FTEs are already operating at maximum capacity, having absorbed the baseline operational and instructional tasks of the eliminated positions. Assigning these additional responsibilities to current staff is not viable

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")*

[Type response here]

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

[Type response here]

Safeguards: *Does this policy change or program reduction create unintended consequences for specific geographic areas or student populations? How will those be mitigated?*

[Type response here]

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:

- Name: Julie Clark
- Email: julie.clark@schools.utah.gov
- 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 3% (\$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 3% 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 2028 Ongoing Requested:** \$750,000 (Authorized as up to 3% administrative set-aside from the \$15,000,000 ongoing literacy allocation in S.B. 241)
- **FY 2028 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 3% of administrative funds would also be ongoing funding.

Budget Request:

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

	FY 2027 (Proposed Supplemental)	FY 2028 (Proposed One Time and/or Ongoing)
TOTAL REQUESTED		\$ 750,000
	Note	Would need to move the USBE administrative appropriated funds into the MSP

FY 2028 Itemized:

Use	State Code Alignment	Amount
Educational Specialist(s)	53E-6-302	\$160,000
High Quality Instructional Materials Review Cycles	53G-10-806	\$50,000
Science of Reading Panel Member Travel Expenses for Meetings and Onsite Visits	53E-3-1003	\$50,000

Resource and Professional Learning Creation	53E-3-1001	\$175,000
Onsite Monitoring Travel Expenses for USBE Staff	53G-10-805	\$25,000
Community and Parent Literacy Engagement	53E-3-1004	\$75,000
Literacy Professional Learning Delivery and Travel Expenses	53E-3-1003	\$100,000
Books for Kids in Title One School	53E-3-1004	\$165,000
TOTAL		\$750,000

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

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	\$160,000	ongoing

	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 (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		
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	(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 paraprofessional, teachers, coaches, administrators, and parents	53E-3-1001 analyze, align, and target resources, 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	\$175,000	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	\$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	\$50,000	ongoing

	preparation programs through onsite visits		
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.	\$25,000	ongoing
Curriculum reviews	53G-10-806 Each LEA shall adopt science of reading 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	\$50,000	ongoing
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;	\$75,000	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 3% 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	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
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		the science of 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	the science of 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
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		intervention through which a 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.	intervention through which a 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.
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53G-10-802	Individualized Reading Plans	(i)within 45 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	(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 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	(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	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 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

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Information Technology Budget Increase Request

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

- Name: Jared Felt
- Email: jared.felt@schools.utah.gov
- USBE Section: Information Technology

Director Reviewer: Jared Felt

(Note: You must review this request with your Director prior to submission).

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 an ongoing increase of \$1,246,984 per year, effective FY2028, to cover software and cloud hosting cost growth, upgrade to our

security monitoring platform, a new software solution request from the agency for the purpose of project and strategic planning management, contracted IT work supporting unfunded mandates, and hardware and infrastructure renewal cycles. This request does not include personnel costs.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

USBE's Information Technology budget has not increased since at least 2017, while non-personnel ITAD operating costs have grown substantially. The ITAD program's current FY27 non-personnel budget is \$1,664,305. Based on known contract renewals, licensing agreements, a new software solution request from the agency for the purpose of project and strategic planning management, upgrades to our security monitoring platform, and increased cloud hosting costs, this is forecast to average \$2,911,289 per year across FY28-32, an ongoing increase of \$1,246,984 per year (74.9%). Software and cloud licensing is the largest driver: costs grow from \$645,525 in FY27 to an average of \$1,221,580 across FY28-32, driven by an increase in Microsoft Azure hosting costs, security monitoring platform upgrade, and a new software subscription. A second software category, tied to routine Microsoft, RedGate SQL, and Veracode escalators, adds a further \$67,760 on average. Security tooling adds \$286,378, driven mainly by a necessary upgrade to a Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) platform recommended by USBE's third-party security audit team. Contracted IT work supporting unfunded mandates adds \$60,775. The remainder reflects hardware refresh cycles, facility, and routine operating cost growth. This request does not

include personnel or indirect personnel costs, which are addressed separately through the standard finance process.

The Source:

This request originated from an internal budget review conducted by IT Leadership and the Finance team, using ITAD program cost data verified line item by line item against FY 27 IT ITAD budget.

Projected Results:

Zero unplanned service disruptions to LEA-facing systems due to lapsed software licenses or deferred security maintenance, tracked starting FY28. 100% of required security certifications and software subscriptions remain active and current, verified annually.

Consequence of Inaction:

USBE has covered rising IT costs for several years by drawing on carry-forward savings rather than budgeted funds. That reserve is not a sustainable funding source and is being depleted to cover costs that should be part of the base budget. Without this increase, ITAD would need to absorb rising software and cloud hosting costs, a new software purchase, and contracted work supporting unfunded mandates within a flat budget, requiring cuts to contractor support, security tooling, or delayed hardware refresh cycles. Any of these increases operational and security risk for the systems ITAD supports, with potential disruption to services used by USBE and LEAs.

Evidence & Data:

See attached ITAD Program FY27-FY32 Budget Forecast, itemized by cost category and verified against ITAD-coded line items in the FY27 IT Budget Breakdown workbook, averaged across the FY28-32 forecast. Personnel and indirect personnel costs are excluded from this request.

ITAD Program - FY27 to FY32 Budget Forecast (Evidence & Data)

Category	FY27 Base	FY28-32 5-Yr Avg	Increase	Notes
Software (Core/Shared Services)	\$645,525	\$1,221,580	\$576,055	Includes the Microsoft Azure - Hosting Services - ITAD increase (FY27 \$260,000 to FY28 \$618,000, escalating 5%/year) and a new software subscription not in the original forecast. The Azure increase reflects funding reallocated from Powerbuilder, which no longer requires funding under the USIMS upgrade.
Contractor Services	\$444,262	\$505,037	\$60,775	Contracted IT work (Contractor - IT WORK) supporting unfunded mandates.
Software (IT Only) Licensing	\$431,942	\$499,702	\$67,760	Routine Microsoft, RedGate SQL, and Veracode escalators. No longer includes Powerbuilder relicensing, which is retired under the USIMS upgrade.
Hardware	\$36,825	\$247,138	\$210,314	Computer refresh cycle and AV/hardware replacement, including the Nutanix hardware refresh landing in FY29.
Building/Facility & Telecom	\$53,209	\$88,449	\$35,240	Rent, building and grounds, phone service, and cell phone costs allocated to ITAD.
Office Supplies, Dues & Misc	\$29,954	\$39,382	\$9,428	Books & subscriptions, general office expenses, and insurance & bonds.
Security Tools & Insurance	\$16,148	\$302,526	\$286,378	F5 Networks Layer 7 Firewall, plus a new Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) platform (\$275,000/year, ongoing starting FY28) recommended by USBE's third-party security audit team. A SIEM platform aggregates and analyzes security log and event data across the network in real time, improving threat detection and supporting compliance and audit reporting.
Travel	\$6,441	\$7,474	\$1,033	In-state and out-of-state travel.
Total	\$1,664,305	\$2,911,289	\$1,246,984	

Personnel and indirect personnel costs are excluded from this request; those costs are addressed separately through the standard finance process. All figures verified against ITAD-coded line items in the FY27 IT Budget Breakdown workbook (Maintenance tab), averaged across the FY28-32 forecast.

Gartner, an independent research and advisory firm that tracks global technology spending projects spending will reach \$1.468 trillion in 2026, up 15.5%. Gartner attributes much of that growth to AI features now embedded in software organizations already own, which raises both licensing costs and per-seat pricing. Gartner also forecasts data center systems spending will grow 62.5% in 2026, the fastest growth of any IT category it tracks, driven by the buildout of AI infrastructure and cloud capacity. That mirrors the hosting

cost pressure driving the Microsoft Azure increase in this request. Rising memory prices are pushing device and hardware costs higher as well, consistent with the hardware refresh costs included here. These figures are worldwide enterprise averages. USBE does not have access to a Utah-specific or K-12-specific cost index, so they are offered as directional confirmation that software, cloud, and hardware costs are rising broadly, not as a precise benchmark for this request.

SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

Financial Ask:

- FY 2028 Ongoing Requested: \$1,246,984
- FY 2027 One-Time Requested: \$0
- Proposed Offsets / Savings: \$0 (Amount saved by cutting redundancies or reallocating existing funds)

The Offset Strategy:

No offsetting cuts or reallocations are proposed. This request reflects real cost increases in existing ITAD operations plus upgrades to USBE security platform and one new software purchase.

Future Obligations:

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

[X] Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe: ITAD costs grow unevenly across the five-year forecast, driven by multi-year renewal cycles. The \$1,246,984 figure is the FY28-32 average annual increase and is requested as an ongoing addition to the base budget starting FY28, not a one-time or sunseting request.

Itemized Budget Request:

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

ITAD Program - Total Budget Request Summary

	FY 2027 One-Time Supplemental	FY 2028 Ongoing
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$0	\$1,246,984

FY 2028-2032 Itemized:

ITAD Program - FY27 to FY32 Budget Forecast (Evidence & Data)

Category	FY27 Base	FY28-32 5-Yr Avg	Increase	Notes
Software (Core/Shared Services)	\$645,525	\$1,221,580	\$576,055	Includes the Microsoft Azure - Hosting Services - ITAD increase (FY27 \$260,000 to FY28 \$618,000, escalating 5%/year) and a new software subscription not in the original forecast. The Azure increase reflects funding reallocated from Powerbuilder, which no longer requires funding under the USIMS upgrade.
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Hardware	\$36,825	\$247,138	\$210,314	Computer refresh cycle and AV/hardware replacement, including the Nutanix hardware refresh landing in FY29.
Building/Facility & Telecom	\$53,209	\$88,449	\$35,240	Rent, building and grounds, phone service, and cell phone costs allocated to ITAD.
Office Supplies, Dues & Misc	\$29,954	\$39,382	\$9,428	Books & subscriptions, general office expenses, and insurance & bonds.
Security Tools & Insurance	\$16,148	\$302,526	\$286,378	F5 Networks Layer 7 Firewall, plus a new Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) platform (\$275,000/year, ongoing starting FY28) recommended by USBE's third-party security audit team. A SIEM platform aggregates and analyzes security log and event data across the network in real time, improving threat detection and supporting compliance and audit reporting.
Travel	\$6,441	\$7,474	\$1,033	In-state and out-of-state travel.
Total	\$1,664,305	\$2,911,289	\$1,246,984	

Personnel and indirect personnel costs are excluded from this request; those costs are addressed separately through the standard finance process. All figures verified against ITAD-coded line items in the FY27 IT Budget Breakdown workbook (Maintenance tab), averaged across the FY28-32 forecast.

New USBE FTEs Requested: 0 (Enter number of new FTEs)

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

Yes. This request funds increased costs for systems and services already managed by current staff. No new positions are requested.

If no FTEs are required, explain.

Performance Measures:

1. Zero unplanned service disruptions to LEA-facing systems due to lapsed software licenses or deferred security maintenance, tracked starting FY28.
2. 100% of required security requirements and software subscriptions remain active and current, verified annually.

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Parent and LEA Hotline Support

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

- Name: Debbie Davis, Chief Audit Executive
- Email: Debbie.davis@schools.utah.gov
- USBE Section: Internal Audit Department

Deputy Superintendent Reviewer: NA

Nature of Request (Select all that apply):

☐ **Policy Change:** Creating, amending, or repealing Utah State Code.

☒ **New/Increased Funding:** Seeking new financial resources.

☐ **Efficiency / Reduction:** Proposing the elimination or reduction of a program, mandate, or funding stream.

Purpose Statement (BLUF - Bottom Line Up Front):

We are requesting \$150,000 in ongoing funding to support efficient and effective maintenance of the Public Education Hotline used to intake concerns from parents, students and educators on behalf of local education agencies (LEAs); as well as to respond to parents, students and educators, refer concerns to LEAs, and train and provide technical assistance to LEA personnel on hotline concerns and investigations.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

The Problem:

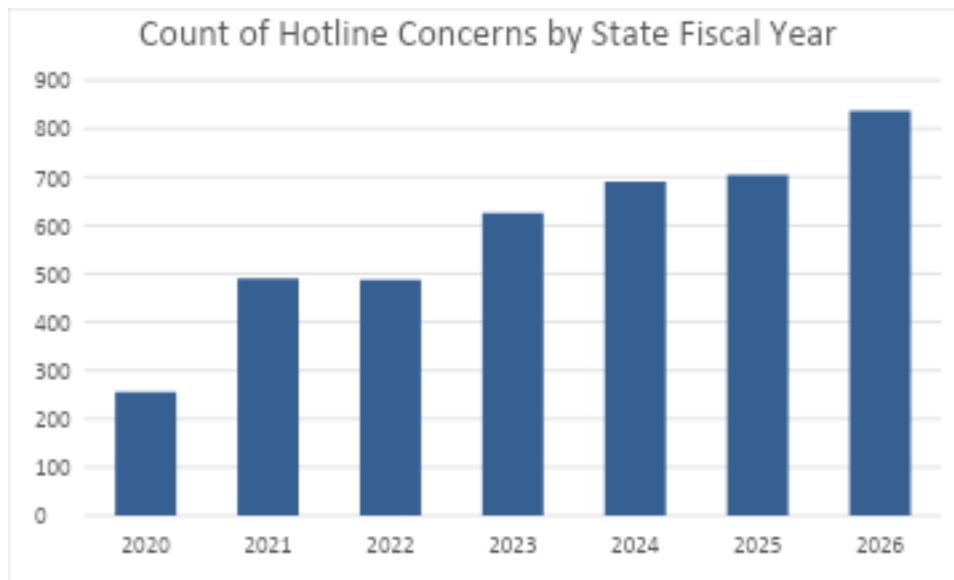
The risk exposure to the Utah State Board of Education (Board) and State of Utah (e.g., perception, risk management, and legal liability), as well as students (and their families) and educators (e.g., safety, proficiency) in the public education system, is increasing as evidenced by the increasing number of concerns received on the Public Education Hotline (Hotline). Due to the increase, the Internal Audit Department does not have capacity to maintain the same level of support provided to parents, students, teachers, and LEAs with existing resources.

Additional Context

The vision and mission of public education includes opening the doors of opportunity for all Utah children and statute recognizes that public education supports parents in the education of their children. The Board is also responsible for promoting high-quality education through its role as the licensing body for educators.

The Board is required by statute (53E-3-401(8)(a)-(e)) to provide a method for an individual to bring a violation of statute or board rule to the attention of the state board and regarding reviewing and investigating alleged compliance issues. The current method is the Public Education Hotline (Hotline). Several specific statutes (53G-2-103(8), 53G-2-104(5), 53G-2-105(6), 53G-10-103(8)(b)) direct individuals to report violations using this method.

The chart below evidences the use of the Hotline, which is up approximately 20% for state fiscal year 2026 (through 5/28/2026).



Concerns related to LEAs received on the Hotline have been specific to 115 different LEAs, which represents approximately 70% of LEAs statewide.

Concerns also evidence communication with and information provided to parents, students, and educators, which represent approximately 80% of individuals submitting concerns (i.e., approximately 57% of concerns come from parents/guardians/family members, 18% come from public education employees, and 4% come from students).

Projected Results:

- Decreased Hotline response and referral timelines
- Increased availability of training materials

Consequence of Inaction:

- Increased risk (e.g., safety, legal, financial) to the state of Utah, school communities, and families as Hotline concerns are not handled effectively or timely.

- Decreased time for other functions of Internal Audit Department, such as audits that inform policymaking (e.g., Attendance, USDB, CTE).

Evidence & Data:

This request is for an investment of .002% (\$157K) of the public education system budget of \$8.9 billion for an additional Hotline Specialist.

A few examples of responses the Internal Audit Department has received from individuals that have contacted the Hotline evidences that the current approach is having a positive impact, and that an investment to maintain this level of service will be valuable to parents, students, educators, LEAs, and policymakers.

- *"Dear Person Who Took the Time To Write Such a Thorough Response To My Last Email,
You are my hero! Thank you so much for your response to my inquiry email. I'm sure it took so much time out of an already busy day..."*
- *"Dear USBE Internal Audit Team,
Thank you for your assistance and for referring my concerns...I sincerely appreciate your time, guidance, and the care you have taken to ensure this matter is directed to the appropriate entities."*
- *"Dear Internal Audit Department,
I would also like to express my sincere gratitude for the additional resources and guidance you shared. Your response was helpful and provided important direction during a moment of significant concern for my family."*
- *"Thank you! ... I sincerely appreciate how quickly you responded and for giving me so much helpful information."*

Another proof of approach is the action LEAs have taken, or are taking, in response to Hotlines or hotline related actions that improves accountability and transparency of policies and processes with parents and students. Examples include:

- After receiving a hotline referral, a charter school hired a firm to

investigate. The referral and investigation have led to a several months-long effort to update policies and the LEA's investigation protocols specific to student bullying.

- After receiving a Notification of Noncompliance, a large LEA designed and implemented a policy about how it will respond to and resolve concerns; thus, providing transparency to parents, students, and educators. Prior to this notification, the LEA did not have a policy.
- After receiving a Notification of Noncompliance, several LEAs have either established a local hotline and made it available on their LEA/school websites or the LEAs link to the state's Public Education Hotline on their LEA/school websites.

Finally, given the above it is reasonable to assume that if an additional Hotline Specialist were hired, additional positive outcomes would be evident as the Internal Audit Department would have capacity that it currently lacks to do additional analysis of available Hotline data and provide training accordingly.

SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

Financial Ask:

- **FY 2028 Ongoing Requested:** \$150,000
- **FY 2028 One-Time Requested:** \$7,000
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** \$0

The Offset Strategy:

There are no additional efficiencies within the Internal Audit Department that would yield sufficient funds for this request.

Future Obligations:

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

If yes, please describe: _____

TOTAL Budget Request:

	FY 2027 Proposed One-Time Supplemental	FY 2028 Proposed One-Time or Ongoing
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$0	\$150,000 (on-going) \$7,000 (one-time)

FY 2028 Itemized:

Use	Amount
Wages and Benefits/Indirect Costs	\$150,000 (on-going)
Data Processing Hardware/Supplies/Other Setup Costs	\$7,000 (one-time)
TOTAL	\$157,000

New USBE FTEs Requested: 1

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

The Internal Audit Department cannot assign these responsibilities to current FTE's as all Department FTE's are already working at design capacity or beyond (i.e., overtime) to fulfill the critical functions and required administrative tasks of the Department. Additionally, there is currently a backlog of board prioritized internal audits, and internally identified projects (including related to the Hotline) that have not been started.

If no FTEs are required, explain.

Not applicable - one FTE is being requested.

Performance Measures:

- Increase the number of dedicated hotline specialists (from one to two FTEs) who support parents, students, public education employees and LEAs, with the intent to:
 - Decrease Internal Audit administrative time spent on the hotline process by 50%, which will lower the average cost to address each hotline and increase time for other functions of Internal Audit Department, such as audits that inform policymaking (e.g., Attendance, USDB, CTE).

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Mentoring and Supporting Teacher Excellence and Refinement (MASTER) Program Request for a Stable, Ongoing Funding Structure

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

- Name: Katie Dewey Hill
- Email: Katie.hill@schools.utah.gov
- 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)

Purpose Statement (BLUF - Bottom Line Up Front):

This request seeks the same amount (\$2.4 million) of funding ongoing rather than from year to year.

State code [53F-5-222](#) (established 07/01/2024). The Mentoring and Supporting Teacher Excellence and Refinement Pilot Program was established by the 2024 legislative session and was funded for two years. In the 2026 Legislative Session, the funding was renewed, but for one year through [HB 146](#) and the word “Pilot” was removed from the program. The early indicators of the impact of this program on teacher effectiveness and teacher retention has been very promising. In order to continue the program and collect more data on its effectiveness and encourage the investment of resources from LEAs including time, money, and personnel to innovate according to the spirit of the legislation- an ongoing funding stream is needed to support longer-term, more sustainable designs by LEAs.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

Early indicators on the success of this program are very promising. In order to collect more accurate, and actionable data, the program needs to be in place for a longer period of time.

Extending the pilot program in an ongoing manner will allow trend lines of both qualitative and quantitative data to become more visible, allowing for accurate decision making for legislators as to the expansion of this initiative. Having this funding source be year to year gives LEAs pause in investing in innovative ideas and discourages some from participating at all.

- Make adjustments to verbiage and dates that allow for an extension of the program from two years to four years.
- Extend the repeal date to allow time to assess and consider the data, allowing for decision making about continuation or expansion.
- Add language that permits LEAs who are currently in the program to have priority for continuation, before accepting any new applicants, thus providing that longer timeframe for data collection.

Teacher retention is a critical component of an effective education system. Highly qualified, and experienced teachers, consistently provide the best outcomes for students. Teacher leadership opportunities not only encourage teachers to stay in the profession, but also grow the skills of teacher leaders and those they serve by leading from the classroom.

The MASTER grant is organized to provide strong administrative support for teachers seeking leadership and growth opportunities.

The Source:

This program originated with the legislature wanting to incentivize teacher leadership, promote teacher retention systems, and create conditions for great teachers to remain in the classroom where they can make the most impact on students rather than move to district or administrative positions as the only way to be promoted or increase their salary levels. The only opposition to this program has been that some LEAs are finding it difficult to dedicate the resources to participate because of the lack of long-term funding.

Projected Results:

These measures could include:

- Educator surveys - requesting information on this program's impact on their own practice
- Teacher Retention statistics could be used to measure effectiveness, but the broadness of allowable expenses and proposals could make it difficult to evaluate this in a standardized way

Note: In order to meaningfully continue the program and collect more data on its effectiveness, this request seeks the same amount of funding, but ongoing. A longer timeline is required to collect teacher retention and student growth data to determine the overall effectiveness of the initiative.

Consequence of Inaction:

The MASTER Program will come to an end in June of 2027 when funding is exhausted. While early evidence from current grant participants is promising, it may be difficult to make decisions about continuation without additional data.

Evidence & Data:

As the program has currently only been in place two years, the data is predominantly baseline data at this time, hence the request to extend the program and the timeline to be ongoing so that data can be collected for decision making.

During the first year of the pilot, grants were awarded to 30 LEAs, including 20 charter schools and 10 districts. In the second year, all of the initial LEAs continued in the program and there was funds to add an additional eight LEAs.

The next cohort will completely consist of new applications and be a competitive review cycle that will be based on the merit of the proposal and priority won't necessarily be given for those who have applied for funds in years past.

Funded Activities from the previous cycle:

Mentoring and New Teacher support:

Structured Mentoring Frameworks: Funding master teachers to provide weekly, classroom-based guidance to new, developing,

and early-career educators on instructional practices, classroom management, and student engagement.

Mentor Endorsement Training: Compensating experienced educators to participate in and complete formal state mentoring endorsement courses and modules.

Comprehensive Teacher Onboarding: Developing reusable orientation materials and facilitating structured onboarding weeks to smoothly integrate new hires.

Student Teacher Supervision: Providing stipends to teachers who act as mentors for student teachers and practicum students, strengthening the educator pipeline.

Alternative Licensure Guidance: Funding master teachers to provide specialized, multi-year mentorship to paraprofessionals and new teachers undergoing alternative licensure pathways (such as the APPEL program).

Instructional Coaching and Peer Observation

Guided Coaching Cycles: Funding teacher leaders to conduct targeted classroom observations, identify foundational teaching practices, and provide direct, supportive peer feedback.

Model Teacher Programs: Pairing highly qualified educators with volunteer peer teachers to engage in mutual, structured observations and debriefs that model effective teaching.

Dedicated Substitute Coverage: Providing funding for classroom substitutes so that master teachers can leave their classrooms to observe and coach their peer mentees during the school day.

Specialized Content Coaching: Designating "Master Teachers" in specialized subject areas that lack dedicated district specialists (such as Art, Social Studies, and Physical Education) to ensure all teachers receive targeted support.

Evidence-Based Coaching Frameworks: Leveraging specific instructional resources (like the Get Better Faster framework) to systematically guide coaching and teacher development.

For the complete report, see [this Research Brief](#) compiled through interviews from participating LEAs compiled by WestEd.

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 2028 Ongoing Requested:** \$2.4 million per year
- **FY 2028 One-Time Requested:** \$0
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** \$0

The Offset Strategy:

Paid Professional Hours could be re-allocated or lumped in with the new expectation to fund specific teacher leadership efforts.

Future Obligations:

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

☒ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe: It would require funds to be encumbered for this purpose every year and demand that USBE take more of a support role in helping to provide structures for LEAs to consider ways to use the funds that yield the intended result and meaningfully encourage positive innovative ideas. In addition to the extra money, USBE staff would be actively involved in consulting with LEAs to plan, sustain, and build teacher leaders as aligned with our strategic plan.

Budget Request:

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

	FY 2027 (Proposed One-Time Supplemental)	FY 2028 (Proposed Ongoing and/or One-Time)
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$0	\$2.4 Million (ongoing rather than one-time)

FY 2028 Itemized:

Use	Amount
MASTER Program Grant Awards	\$ 2,244,000
Support Costs approved for State Board use (up to 6.5%)	\$156,000
TOTAL	2.4 Million

New USBE FTEs Requested: __0__ (Enter number of new FTEs)

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

Yes - this duty can be handled through the Effective Outcomes Team. I anticipate the Effective Outcomes Coordinator, who oversees Mentoring and Coaching could lead this effort.

If no FTEs are required, explain.

We can use existing staff (see above)

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.

- Educator Retention data - would require tighter parameters on the grant to ensure that the retention is tied to the initiative LEAs are implementing
- Student Outcomes (increased test scores, attendance, or other specific metric LEAs measure)- would require those goals to be included in the grant proposal and the evidence tied directly to practice.

Both of these metrics respect the broad latitude LEAs have in determining how they can use these funds, but in order to show causation, there would need to be more expectation in the application itself to ensure what is measured is tied to the proposal.

SECTION 4: POLICY & STATUTE

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

Code Sections Affected:

[53F-5-222](#). Mentoring and Supporting Teacher Excellence and Refinement Pilot Program.

Suggested Legislative Solution:

Create an ongoing funding stream so that LEAs can invest in longer-term solutions that can be funded beyond one year.

Safeguards:

The current legislation does not differentiate between the size of the LEA, and the amount of funding received. Thus a very small LEA (such as a charter or rural area) may receive the same amount of funding as a very large LEA.

For the purposes of data collection within the program, this allows us to learn about the impact of different funding levels across different LEAs. If this program is expanded and continued beyond a pilot status, this difference should be considered and addressed.

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Special Education Funding for Expanding Charters

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

- Name: Sam Urie; Dale Frost
- Email: sam.urie@schools.utah.gov; dale.frost@schools.utah.gov
- USBE Section: Finance

Director Reviewer: Stacey Hutchings

(Note: You must review this request with your Director prior to submission).

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 a statutory amendment to ensure that when charter schools with high special education prevalence rates expand funding matches actual enrollment for students with disabilities.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

Funding for students with disabilities flows to districts and charter schools on a rolling five-year average of funding. In most cases, this formula and law has served all students well. But when a charter school expands, particularly one with high prevalence of such students (like Spectrum Academy), students with disabilities in the new campus receive no special education add-on funding.

The Source:

This proposal is engendered by Spectrum Academy's approved expansions plans in Washington County. While this proposal is submitted by the State Charter School Board, other supporters include UAPCS, Spectrum Academy, and USBE, which has heard, considered and adopted a rule change on this issue in 2026.

Opposition, such as it is, will come primarily in the form of limited finances in FY27. SCSB therefore suggests that this issue be solved with a one-time allocation in the year the school opens, that USBE can distribute to the school based on actual enrollment as determined by Dec 1 count.

Projected Results:

If approved, funding for students who enroll at Spectrum Academy at its new Washington County campus will be funded.

Consequence of Inaction:

Without such funding, it is doubtful that Spectrum could expand and serve its student population consistent with FAPE because it would receive no add-on funding for students with disabilities.

Evidence & Data:

Evidence for this is outlined in USBE Board meeting on April 3, 2026 and the Finance Committee on May 8, 2026 and led to USBE amending R277-479 in 2026.

SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

Financial Ask:

- **FY 2027 Supplemental Requested:**
- **FY 2028 Ongoing Requested:**
- **FY 2028 One-Time Requested:** Will vary based on enrollment. Amount should come from enrollment estimates for FY28 at Spectrum's Washington County campus, then adjusted for actual enrollment after Dec 1 count. USBE adopted a rule change in 2026 seeking a legislative change, which we support in concept. However, if the legislative change requires ongoing funding, we worry that it may not be funded for FY27 and therefore suggest a one-time funding option.
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** Whatever amount is needed, it will be offset over time with reductions in enrollment as students transfer into Spectrum Academy. The one-time funding takes into account the hold harmless for districts or charters that lose students (or do not enroll students) who instead attend Spectrum.

The Offset Strategy:

The offset happens automatically as the five-year rolling average catches up over five years to enrollment at all LEAs in the area.

Future Obligations:

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

If yes, please describe: Request for funding here is one-time that does not set up an ongoing obligation beyond the first year or couple of years, while the five-year rolling average of relevant enrollment cycles through the system.

Budget Request:

	FY 2027 (Proposed Supplemental One-time)	FY 2028 (proposed on-going and/or one-time)
TOTAL REQUESTED		One time based on enrollment—potentially near \$2 million

FY 2028 Itemized:

Use	Amount
Funding for enrolled students with disabilities at Spectrum Academy in 2027-2028 school year	~\$2,000,00 0
TOTAL	~\$2,000,00 0

New USBE FTEs Requested: 0**Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.**

None needed

If no FTEs are required, explain.

No new FTE needed. This request simply funds expanded enrollment at one LEA.

Performance Measures:

Performance measures will be FAPE and special education compliance at Spectrum Academy's Washington County campus.

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")*

Utah Code § 53F-2-307 — “Weighted pupil units for programs for students with disabilities — Local school board allocation.”

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

Consistent with USBE's June action we support a legislative change such that 1.5 WPU's per special education ADM for LEAs where more than 70% of students receive special education services. Alternatively, we support a one-time allocation (likely from Education Stabilization Fund) to solve the immediate issue if ongoing funding is determined to be unavailable.

Safeguards: *Does this policy change or program reduction create unintended consequences for specific geographic areas or student populations? How will those be mitigated?*

Rather, this proposal would reduce unintended consequences for students with disabilities in Washington County who choose to enroll in Spectrum Academy's local campus when it opens in 2027.

Agency: UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Request Title: *K-3 Classroom Excellence Grant Program*

Purpose Statement: This request proposes the creation of the K-3 Classroom Excellence Grant Program. This statewide, competitive grant would provide matching funds to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to hire and train paraprofessionals for service in kindergarten through 3rd-grade classrooms.

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.

Current Funding for FY 2028: *(Provide current year funding differentiating one-time and ongoing funding for the program.)*

FY 2028 Ongoing Funding = \$000

FY 2028 One-Time Funding = \$000

Projected Results: *(Provide 1-2 bullets on how the policy/funding request would lead to a measurable outcome in the K-12 education system (ex. performance measure).)*

- **Increase the percentage of 3rd-grade students reading on grade level by providing direct, small-group instruction.**
- **Improve classroom environments by providing immediate behavioral support to students, reducing disruptions and increasing instructional time for all learners.**
- **Studies have found that hiring additional paraprofessionals to deliver targeted instruction can be a cost-effective strategy for improving student test scores, particularly in reading.**

Rationale:

- **Leverages State Funds:** The matching requirement ensures local investment and allows state dollars to support a greater number of positions.
- **Promotes Innovation and Accountability:** A competitive process encourages LEAs to develop high-quality, evidence-based plans for how they will train and deploy paraprofessionals for maximum academic impact.
- **Targeted Support:** The grant criteria can prioritize schools with the greatest need, such as those in the state's springboard program or the Federal School Improvement programs or those with significant early literacy gaps.
- **Special Education Support:** Additional well-trained paraprofessionals could decrease in time when identifying needed student supports as paraprofessionals are trained in student identification methods such as literacy/math screening or Child Find practices

If not funded/approved:

LEAs will continue to address student needs with existing resources, and a valuable opportunity to leverage state funds for targeted, early-grade support will be missed.

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

Name: Elisse Newey

Email Address: elisse.newey@schools.utah.gov

Phone Number:

USBE Section:Policy

FUNDING REQUEST

Board Action for Request: For Consideration in the October Board Meeting.

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

This request seeks \$20 million in ongoing state funds to create a total program of at least \$40 million when combined with local matching funds. This program will allow LEAs to hire, train, and deploy paraprofessionals to provide targeted academic and behavioral interventions in K-3 classrooms, addressing critical needs in early learning and classroom management.

2. Amount Requested:

Funding Source	Amount (\$)
FY 2028 one-time funding	\$ 20,000,000
FY 2028 ongoing funding	\$
TOTAL funding requested	\$ 20,000,000

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

Funding Source(s): State General Fund

Cost Category: Other Charges/Pass Through: \$20,000,000

This entire amount will be distributed to LEAs through a competitive grant process. With a 1:1 local match, this will create a total program of at least \$40,000,000, sufficient to fund approximately 650-700 paraprofessionals at an estimated total cost of \$30,000 per position (including salary and benefits).

3. Describe the history of the issues or concerns including relevant context and timelines:

Since 2020, educators statewide have reported a marked increase in classroom disruptions and students exhibiting lagging social-emotional skills. This trend, combined with persistent academic achievement gaps, has placed an unsustainable burden on K-3 teachers. While some LEAs have used local funds to hire support staff, there is no consistent, statewide strategy to ensure this critical support is available where it is needed most.

4. What are the suggested legislative solutions?

The suggested solution is to amend Utah Code to create the K-3 Classroom Excellence Grant Program. The statute should direct the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to administer a competitive grant with a local matching requirement. The legislation should specify that grant applications be scored on the quality of their plans for recruiting, training, deploying, and supervising paraprofessionals to deliver evidence-based academic and behavioral interventions.

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

The competitive grant model makes this request highly scalable. If a lower amount of state funding is appropriated, the program remains viable, and USBE will simply award fewer grants based on the available funds.

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

LEAs currently use a variety of limited funding streams, such as federal Title I funds or local property tax revenue, to hire paraprofessionals. However, these resources are insufficient to provide comprehensive support across all K-3 classrooms and often result in inequities between districts.

USBE has already developed a strong support system for paraprofessionals with training options and the [Utah Standards for Instructional Paraeducators](#). This grant program would only build upon this solid foundation.

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

Early Learning & Personalized Teaching and Learning: By providing targeted, individualized instruction in literacy and numeracy.

Safe and Healthy Schools: By adding another trained adult to the classroom, the program will improve the classroom climate, reduce disruptive behavior, and provide immediate support to students struggling with self-regulation, thereby increasing safety and instructional time.

8. Provide details, sources, research, and analysis to which forms evidence-basis for this request or the associated program.

Extensive educational research shows that the impact of paraprofessionals is maximized when they are trained and deployed to deliver structured interventions. For example:

https://fullbloom.bynder.com/m/38dfec999ac1abc4/original/HDT-Case-Study_Massachusetts_Literacy.pdf

Academic Impact: Meta-analyses of tutoring programs show that well-trained paraprofessionals can produce substantial learning gains, equivalent to a student advancing from the 50th to the 66th percentile.

Behavioral Impact: The presence of a trained paraprofessional has a direct effect on classroom management. This additional adult can provide co-regulation support for dysregulated students, implement behavior intervention plans, and proactively de-escalate situations. This frees the teacher to continue instruction for the rest of the class, reducing overall disruptions and fostering a more stable learning environment for every student.

9. 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 competitive grant criteria will be structured to prioritize LEAs with schools demonstrating the highest need, including those in the school turnaround program, schools with low 3rd-grade reading scores, and those with high rates of chronic absenteeism or disciplinary incidents. This ensures resources are directed to the students and educators who will benefit most. A clear and transparent scoring rubric will be used to ensure equitable awarding of grants.