

LETTER OF INTENT

Using Longitudinal Data to Support State Education Policymaking in Special Education

LOI deadline: September 3, 2026 | Application deadline: October 1, 2026

1. Descriptive Title

Evaluating Utah's Statewide Policy on Meaningful Inclusion for Students with Extensive Support Needs Using Longitudinal DLM and Implementation Data

2. Grant Competition

Using Longitudinal Data to Support State Education Policymaking in Special Education, ALN 84.324S (FY 2027)

3. Brief Description of the Proposed Project

Utah began statewide implementation of its Portrait of Meaningful Inclusion for Students with Disabilities in 2024. The policy defines meaningful inclusion through four elements: engagement with age-appropriate peers; systems promoting high expectations and learner agency; access to age- and grade-appropriate core standards and resources; and individualized supports and services across settings. With the Utah State Board of Education (USBE), this study proposes to investigate the impact of Utah's Meaningful Inclusion for Students with Disabilities Policy on access and placement for students with extensive support needs, and its effects on academic outcomes in language arts and mathematics

This three-year partnership among USBE, the University of Utah Department of Special Education, and the Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC), who maintains a Master Data Share Agreement with the USBE, will use Utah's statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS), Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate-assessment records, special education enrollment and placement data, and available implementation records. The study will focus on students in grades 3-11 with the most extensive support needs (2% of students who participate in AYP or DLM). We will construct student, school, and LEA cohorts spanning multiple pre- and post-policy years (2019-2026) and measure implementation fidelity using the SWIFT Fidelity of Implementation Tool, participation in USBE supports, and validated SLDS indicators of access to general education.

The project will address five questions: (1) How did educational placements change statewide and across LEAs between 2019 and 2026, and how did implementation of meaningful-inclusion practices vary across schools and LEAs beginning in 2024, (2) How did DLM English language arts and mathematics achievement and growth change after policy implementation? (3) Are stronger or earlier implementation, increased time with peers, and improved access to general education associated with better DLM outcomes? (4) For whom and under what school and LEA conditions are meaningful inclusion implementation, educational placement, access to general education, and academic outcomes greatest or smallest? (5) How are Utah's High Leverage Practices enacted across schools and LEAs, demonstrating successful implementation of meaningful inclusion, and what organizational and instructional conditions support their effective use?

This study will use an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach in which the statewide longitudinal analysis identifies patterns, variation, and successful sites, and a comparative multi-case qualitative study explains what those sites are doing and how those practices operate. Quantitative analyses will combine descriptive trends with comparative interrupted time-series and multilevel event-study models, including quasi-experimental Difference in Difference (DiD) models. Models will address repeated observations nested within schools and LEAs, pre-policy trends, mobility, missingness, and assessment participation.

USBE will co-lead the development of research questions, inform interpretation, and lead decision-making. J. Matt Jameson will lead work on extensive support needs, inclusive education, alternate assessment, and policy. James Gallyer and Andrea Rorrer (UEPC) will lead SLDS preparation, linkage, statistical modeling, analysis, reporting,

reproducible workflows, visual reporting, and policy implications. Products from the project team will include annual decision briefs and dashboards, a technical report and assistance practice guide, privacy-protective analytic code and documentation, presentations, and manuscripts. Findings will be used to support USBE technical assistance, resource allocation, implementation supports, and policy refinement. (Still have about 500 characters to use)

4. Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigators

Principal Investigator: J. Matt Jameson, Ph.D., University of Utah, Department of Special Education

Address: 1705 East Central Campus Drive, SLC, UT, 84112

Telephone: 801585-3742

Email: matt.jameson@utah.edu

USBE Co-Principal Investigator: Leah Voorhies, Utah State Board of Education

Address: 250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Telephone: 801-538-7898

Email: leah.voorhies@schools.utah.gov

UEPC Co-Principal Investigators: James Gallyer, Ph.D., Senior Data Scientist, and Andrea Rorrer, Ph.D., Director, Utah Education Policy Center, University of Utah

Address: 1721 East Campus Center Drive, SLC, UT, 84112

Telephone: 801-585-5594

Email: james.gallyer@utah.edu; andrea.rorrer@utah.edu

5. Key Collaborators and Contractors

Additional USBE Personnel: TBD

Additional UEPC Personnel: TBD

SPED Post Doctoral Scholars: TBD

6. Duration

36 months (proposed start date between July 1 and September 1, 2027)

7. Estimated Total Budget Request

\$1,200,000 total costs over 3 years (maximum permitted; refine after institutional and USBE budget development)