
Issue Brief – Public Education Job Enhancement Program

NUMBER PEDIB-05-16

SUMMARY

The Legislature created the Public Education Job Enhancement Program during the 2001 General Session. The purpose of the program is to attract and retain highly qualified secondary math, physics, chemistry, physical science, learning technology, and information technology teachers. Legislation provided for the creation of a Public Education Job Enhancement Committee which oversees the program.

OBJECTIVE

This brief provides information regarding the history and budget of the job enhancement program, as well as FY 2005 and 2006 budget matters.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Senate Bill 61 (2001 General Session) created the Public Education Job Enhancement Program and the Public Education Job Enhancement Committee. The bill provides monetary awards for a secondary math, science, learning technology, and information technology teachers who commit to teach in one of the subject areas for four years, or obtain a masters degree or endorsement in one of the subject areas. The Job Enhancement Committee established three main programs:

1. ***Opportunity Rewards*** – The Opportunity Rewards program provides signing bonuses that can be used by school districts to hire secondary teachers in the eligible subject areas. New teachers receive a \$5,000 total reward, dispersed in two payments, if they commit to teach in Utah’s public schools for four years.
2. ***Excellence Rewards*** – Excellence Rewards are given to highly qualified educators in the eligible subject areas to encourage them to remain in the profession. Teachers receive a total reward of \$10,000, dispersed in two payments, if they apply for recommendation by the district Superintendent and commit to remain in the profession for four years.
3. ***Advancement Awards*** – The Advancement Awards program provides scholarships to educators to obtain a masters degree or endorsement in an eligible subject area. The maximum award amount authorized by statute is \$20,000. Educators must commit to teach in Utah’s public schools for four years after completing their education.

Appropriations Detail

The bill appropriated a total of \$9.9 million, \$2.4 million ongoing in FY 2002 and \$7.5 million one-time in FY 2001, to implement the provisions outlined in the bill. As revenues began to decline in FY 2002, the Legislature removed \$600,000 in ongoing revenue supporting the program to help balance the FY 2002 budget. The ongoing appropriation for the program was further reduced by \$1.2 million in FY 2003. Finally, during the 2004 General Session, the Legislature removed the remaining \$600,000 in ongoing revenue supporting the program. Currently, only the balance of the original one-time appropriation supports the program. At the end of FY 2004, this balance amounted to \$3,055,000.

With the reduction in FY 2003, the Job Enhancement Committee discontinued the Opportunity Rewards and Excellence Awards. The remaining \$600,000 was used to provide advancement awards until the funding was eliminated in FY 2005.

Administration

With the Leavitt and Walker administrations, the Public Education Job Enhancement Program was administered through the Governor’s Office. A portion of the Minimum School Program appropriation was used to employ a

manager for the program. With the Huntsman administration, the management of the program has been moved to the State Office of Education.

Teachers who received the initial rewards are required to remain teaching for four years. Not all of the original one-time appropriation has been paid out to teachers. Most Opportunity and Excellence awards will be paid out in FY 2006. Teachers that received Advancement Awards may be still working on their degrees. The final pay out of the Opportunity and Excellence awards, as well as continued tracking of the Advancement Awards will still need to take place.

The State Office of Education does not feel it can use Minimum School Program revenues within the State Office of Education to manage the program without approval by the Legislature. The State Office requests a \$26,000 FY 2005 supplemental appropriation from the Minimum School Program carry-forward balances remaining in the program to provide administrative support for the rest of FY 2005. For FY 2006 forward, the Utah State Office of Education requests authorization to use up to \$60,000 annually to from the Minimum School Program carry-forward balances remaining in the program to support program administration. Once the program has been completed, the USOE administrative functions will also end.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

This section provides a guide of what actions might be taken if the Legislature wishes to adopt the recommendations of this brief. The Analyst recommends that the Legislature consider adopting:

1. Provide authorization for the State Office of Education to use Minimum School Program carry-forward revenue dedicated for the Public Education Job Enhancement Program to support program administration at USOE. The amount authorized would be \$26,000 in FY 2005 and up to \$60,000 beginning in FY 2006 until completion of the program.