



PROGRAMS FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS IN UTAH

Utah Legislature
Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel

HIGHLIGHTS

- There is no single definition of a student at risk of academic failure. Student eligibility requirements of programs targeting at-risk students vary.
- An indicator of how many students are at risk of academic failure is the percentage of students not proficient on statewide achievement tests. In the 2010-2011 school year, the following percentages of students **did not** score proficient on criterion-referenced tests (CRTs):
 - Language Arts - 17.8%
 - Mathematics - 31.5%
 - Science - 30.2%
- In fiscal year 2011, total expenditures of school districts and charter schools for major programs targeting at-risk students were \$148.1 million. Of that total, \$105.3 million was spent on federal programs and \$42.8 million was spent on state programs.
- The Legislature appropriated \$34.9 million and \$35.2 million for programs targeted to at-risk students for fiscal years 2012 and 2013, respectively.
- While most programs targeting students at risk of academic failure have yet to be evaluated, evaluations of optional extended-day kindergarten and UPSTART indicate positive effects. UPSTART is not limited to at-risk students, however, and the evaluation did not specifically analyze the effect of the program on at-risk students.

In the 2012 General Session, a bill was passed directing the Education Interim Committee “to conduct a study of programs and initiatives to assist students at risk of academic failure”.¹ As an introduction to the committee’s study, this brief addresses the following questions:

- Who is at risk of academic failure, and how many students are at risk of academic failure?
- What programs are currently available in Utah public schools to assist students at risk of academic failure, and how much is spent or appropriated for these programs?
- How effective are programs targeted to students at risk of academic failure?

WHO IS AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE? HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE?

An essential element of designing a program to assist students at risk of academic failure is to identify who those students are. There is no single definition of a student at risk of academic failure or any uniform method of describing the characteristics of those students. Student eligibility requirements of programs targeted to at-risk students vary from program to program. The targeted populations may include:

- students who score below the proficient level on a test of academic achievement;
- students from low-income families;
- students who are English language learners;
- students who have disabilities;
- students who move frequently; or
- students who are members of certain racial or ethnic minority groups.

The number of students at risk of academic failure may be estimated by examining results on statewide achievement tests.

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of students not proficient on criterion-referenced tests (CRTs), which are administered statewide in language arts and mathematics beginning in grade 3 and in science beginning in grade 5.

Table 1
Number and Percentage of Students Not Proficient on CRTs
2010-2011 School Year

Demographic Categories	Language Arts			Mathematics			Science		
	Total	#Not Proficient	%Not Proficient	Total	#Not Proficient	%Not Proficient	Total	#Not Proficient	%Not Proficient
All Students	379,435	67,658	17.8%	356,184	112,113	31.5%	324,737	98,131	30.2%
African-American	5,309	1,879	35.4%	5,125	2,816	54.9%	4,550	2,549	56.0%
American Indian	4,934	1,864	37.8%	4,697	2,596	55.3%	4,141	2,419	58.4%
Asian	6,998	1,275	18.2%	6,602	1,887	28.6%	6,334	2,089	33.0%
Caucasian	295,984	40,387	13.6%	276,376	73,124	26.5%	253,493	60,064	23.7%
Hispanic	56,525	19,999	35.4%	54,073	28,302	52.3%	47,979	27,345	57.0%
Multiple Races	3,856	680	17.6%	3,669	1,186	32.3%	3,248	991	30.5%
Pacific Islander	5,829	1,574	27.0%	5,642	2,475	43.9%	4,992	2,674	53.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	144,237	40,985	28.4%	138,130	58,202	42.1%	121,977	53,984	44.3%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	235,198	26,673	11.3%	218,054	53,911	24.7%	202,760	44,147	21.8%
SWD (Students with Disabilities)	47,972	23,726	49.5%	44,233	25,403	57.4%	39,161	23,230	59.3%
Not SWD	331,463	43,932	13.3%	311,951	86,710	27.8%	285,576	74,901	26.2%
Mobile	22,954	7,578	33.0%	21,680	10,740	49.5%	19,072	9,740	51.1%
Not Mobile	356,481	60,080	16.9%	334,504	101,373	30.3%	305,665	88,391	28.9%
ELL (English Language Learners)	21,578	13,947	64.6%	21,188	14,895	70.3%	17,871	14,617	81.8%
Not ELL	357,857	53,711	15.0%	334,996	97,218	29.0%	306,866	83,514	27.2%

Source: Data obtained from Utah State Office of Education, *Utah Statewide Scores on the Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT) 2010-2011*.²

Of all the students tested in the 2010-11 school year, 17.8% scored below proficient in language arts, 31.5% scored below proficient in mathematics, and 30.2% scored below proficient in science. These test results demonstrate that the potential pool of students at risk of academic failure is a significant portion of the total student population.

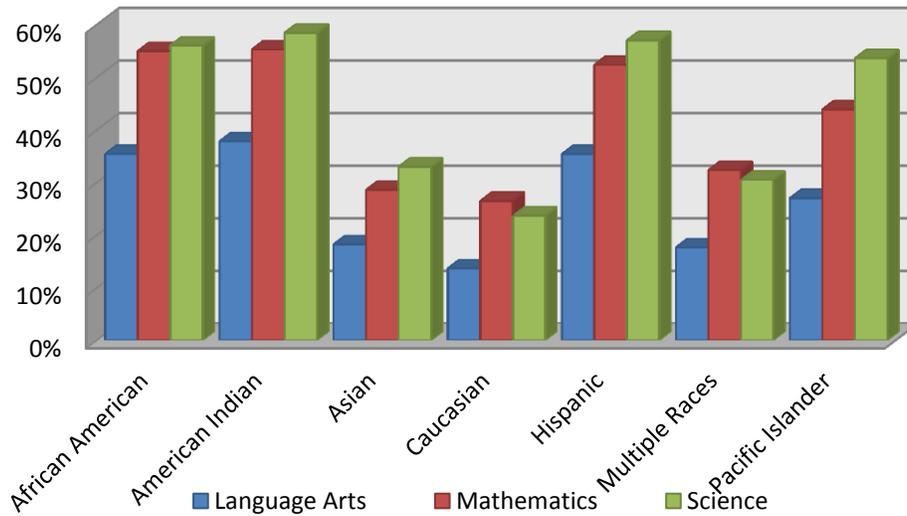
When the percentage of not-proficient students in different demographic groups is compared, it is evident that the risk of academic failure is much higher for some groups than others. **Table 1** indicates that the demographic group with the lowest percentage of not-proficient students is the **Not-economically Disadvantaged** group, with 11.3% not proficient in language arts, 24.7% not proficient in mathematics, and 21.8% not proficient in science. In contrast, the demographic group with the greatest percentage of not-proficient students is the **English Language Learner** group, with 64.6% not proficient in language arts, 70.3% not proficient in mathematics, and 81.8% not proficient in science.

Figure 1 and **Figure 2** show in graphical form the percentage of students who are not proficient by race or ethnicity and by selected categories, i.e., Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities (SWD), Mobile, and English Language Learner (ELL). The data suggest that the risk of academic failure is much higher for students within the African American, American Indian, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander groups than the Caucasian, Asian, and Multiple Races groups.

Students who are economically disadvantaged, have disabilities, are mobile, or are learning English have a high risk of academic failure, as evidenced by the graph in **Figure 2**, which shows that greater than 40% of those students are not proficient in mathematics and science.

Figure 1

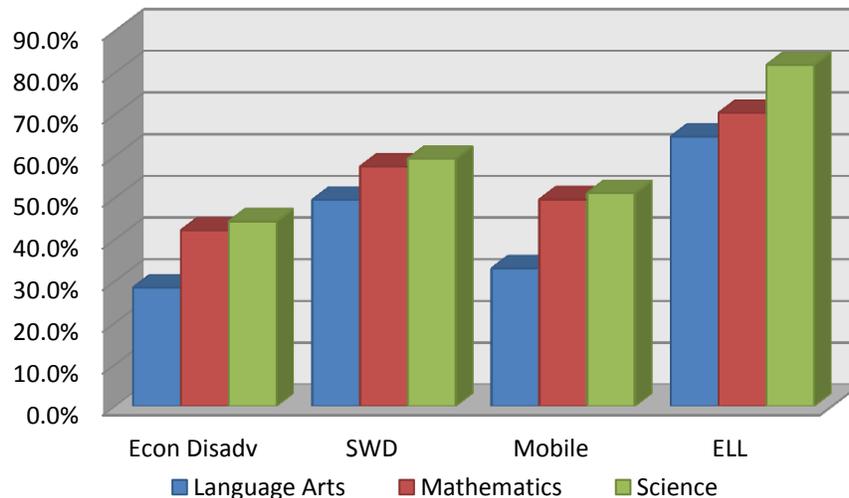
Percentage Not Proficient by Race



Source: Data obtained from Utah State Office of Education, *Utah Statewide Scores on the Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) 2010-2011*.³

Figure 2

Percentage Not Proficient by Selected Categories



Source: Data obtained from Utah State Office of Education, *Utah Statewide Scores on the Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) 2010-2011*.⁴

**WHAT PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE TO ASSIST STUDENTS AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE?
HOW MUCH IS SPENT OR APPROPRIATED FOR THOSE PROGRAMS?**

Table 2 shows the most recently available expenditure data for major statewide programs targeted to at-risk students. The table does not include all expenditures for at-risk students, because there may be district and school-level programs for which the spending data is not separately identified and reported.

Of the total \$148 million in expenditures for programs for at-risk students, \$105.3 million was spent on federal programs, and \$42.8 million was spent on state programs. The federal and state programs targeted to at-risk students are primarily funded by federal and state money, respectively. School districts and charter schools may supplement the federal or state funds with revenue from other sources.

Table 2

School District and Charter School Expenditures for Programs for At-risk Students FY 2011		
State Programs	Participation Qualifications	Expenditures
At-risk Regular Program	Funds are distributed based on the number of WPU's and low-income students. ⁵	\$6,213,929
At-risk Homeless & Minority	Eligibility is determined by number of homeless students plus 50% of the number of disadvantaged minority students. ⁶	\$1,514,605
At-risk MESA	The purpose of MESA is to increase the number of underserved ethnic minority and female students who pursue course work, advanced study, and possible careers in mathematics, engineering, and science. ⁷	\$518,620
At-risk Gang Prevention	Eligible schools must provide gang prevention and intervention, both inside and outside of school grounds. ⁸	\$1,395,077
Highly Impacted Schools	Eligibility is determined by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student mobility rates; • the percentage of students who apply for free school lunch; • the percentage of ethnic minorities; • the percentage of limited English-proficiency students; and • the percentage of students from a single-parent family.⁹ 	\$4,550,268
Interventions for Student Success	Funds are designated to improve the academic performance of students who do not meet performance standards as determined by U-PASS. ¹⁰	\$18,859,682
Optional Extended-day Kindergarten	Eligible students will have the greatest need for additional instruction based on a kindergarten readiness assessment. Eligible schools will have the greatest need as measured by the percentage of students eligible for free lunch. ¹¹	\$8,400,062
ELL Family Literacy Centers	Eligible schools operate an English Language Learner Family Literacy Center. ¹²	\$1,310,327
Total State At-risk Programs		\$42,762,570

Source: Expenditure data obtained from the Annual Program Report (APR) compiled by the Utah State Office of Education.

(Table 2 continued on the following page.)

Table 2 (continued)

School District and Charter School Expenditures for Programs for At-risk Students		
FY 2011		
Federal Programs	Participation Qualifications	Expenditures
ARRA - Title I	Funds are awarded to schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families. ¹³	\$27,483,297
ARRA - School Improvement	Grants are awarded to local educational agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources to substantially raise the achievement of students in the lowest performing schools. ¹⁴	\$1,931,574
ARRA - Homeless	Funds are awarded based on the number of homeless students. ¹⁵	\$272,565
Title I A LEA GRANTS Prior Yr.	Funds are awarded to LEAs or schools that have high numbers or percentages of children from low-income families. ¹⁶	\$19,731,922
Title I A Current Yr.		\$42,772,215
Title I B Reading Skills Improvement	These funds are intended to help improve reading programs and are allotted according to the number of children from families with incomes below the poverty line. ¹⁷	\$275,243
Title I B Current Yr.		\$70,324
Title I B3 Even-Start	These funds are intended for family literacy programs targeted for low-income families with a low level of adult literacy or English language proficiency. ¹⁸	\$18,269
Title I B3 Current Yr.		\$340,785
Title I C Migrant Prior Yr.	These funds are awarded based on the estimated number of migratory children who reside in the state full time. ¹⁹	\$921,047
Title I C Migrant Current Yr.		\$1,112,367
Title I D Neglected & Delinquent Prior Yr.	Neglected or delinquent children are eligible to participate in programs funded by this money to improve their transition from correctional facilities and/or prevent dropping out. ²⁰	\$131,242
Title I D Neglected & Delinquent Current Yr.		\$296,880
Title I F Current Yr.	Funds are awarded to schools with a higher percentage of children from low-income families for the purpose of implementing comprehensive school reforms. ²¹	\$175,000
Title III A – English Language Acquisition	These funds are intended to ensure that English Language Learners (ELL) and/or immigrant students attain English proficiency and promote parent and community participation. ²²	\$5,079,703
Title IV B - Community Learning	The funds serve students and their families attending schools with poverty levels of 40% or higher outside of regular school hours. ²³	\$4,285,133
Title VI B Rural & Low Income	Eligible schools must have 20% or more children from families below the poverty line and must be classified as rural. ²⁴	\$118,164
Title X C Homeless	Funds can be used for any program that provides activities or services for homeless children. Funds are awarded based on the number of homeless students. ²⁵	\$287,483
Total Federal At-risk Programs		\$105,303,213
Total State & Federal At-risk Programs		\$148,065,783

Source: Expenditure data obtained from the Annual Program Report (APR) compiled by the Utah State Office of Education.

Expenditure data on state or federal programs is not available for fiscal years 2012 and 2013; therefore, **Table 3** displays state appropriations for programs targeted to at-risk students for those years.

The largest appropriation is for the Enhancement for At-risk Students program, a block grant program that was established during the 2011 General Session²⁶. Appropriations previously distributed to the At-risk Regular, At-risk Homeless and Minority, At-risk MESA, At-risk Gang Prevention, Highly Impacted Schools, and Interventions for Student Success programs were combined to create the Enhancement for At-risk Students block grant.

According to the rules established by the State Board of Education to administer the Enhancement for At-risk Students program, the funds are distributed to local education agencies (LEAs) based on an equal weighting of low performance on U-PASS tests, poverty, mobility, and limited English proficiency. Four percent of the appropriation for the program is distributed equally among qualifying LEAs, while twenty percent is distributed to high poverty schools. The remainder of the funds is distributed based on an LEA's percentage of students with at-risk factors.²⁷

Table 3

State Funds for Programs Targeted to At-risk Students			
Program	Participation Qualifications	FY 2012 Appropriation	FY 2013 Appropriation
Enhancement for At-risk Students*	Program funds shall be used to improve the academic achievement of students who are at risk of academic failure. ²⁸	\$22,432,273	\$22,432,300
Early Intervention*	Funds are to distributed based on the number of kindergarten students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. ²⁹	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000
UPSTART	A pilot program that uses a home-based educational technology program to develop school readiness skills of preschool children. At least 30% of participants must be from low-income families. ³⁰	\$1,940,300	\$1,940,300
English Language Learner Software Licenses	Funds are to provide statewide access to software licenses for programs to improve English language learner literacy.	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
Title I Schools in Improvement Paraeducators*	Program funds are to be used to hire paraeducators in Title I Schools in Improvement. ³¹		\$300,000
Total State Appropriations for At-risk Programs		\$34,874,573	\$35,174,573

Source: Appropriation amounts were obtained from the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst (OLFA).

*Appropriations for starred programs can be found in the 2012-2013 Appropriations report published by the OLFA.

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE PROGRAMS TARGETED TO STUDENTS AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE?

Table 4 summarizes the evaluations conducted on programs targeted to students at risk of academic failure. While most of the programs receiving state funding have yet to be evaluated, evaluations of the Optional Extended-day Kindergarten (OEK) program and the UPSTART program indicate positive effects.

At the beginning of kindergarten, students participating in the Optional Extended-day Kindergarten program scored significantly below regular kindergarten students on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). At the end of kindergarten, there was no significance difference in the DIBELS scores of the two groups.

A pre- and post-test of early reading skills of children participating in UPSTART and a control group not participating in the program indicates the UPSTART participants made significantly greater progress. UPSTART is not limited to at-risk students, however, and the evaluation did not specifically analyze the effects of the program on at-risk students.

Table 4

Summary of Evaluations of Programs for At-risk Students		
At-risk Program	Evaluation Prepared by	Summary of Evaluation Report
Enhancement for At-risk Students	State Board of Education	In accordance with Utah Code Section 53A-17a-166, the first annual evaluation report will be for the 2011-12 school year.
Optional Extended-day Kindergarten	Utah State Office of Education	Twenty-two schools offering Optional Extended-day Kindergarten (OEK) in the 2009-2010 school year administered the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to OEK and non-OEK kindergarten students. An analysis of the Letter Naming Fluency and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency subtests, which are the subtests that have the highest predictive correlations to reading levels at the end of the first grade, indicates that OEK students performed significantly below non-OEK students at the beginning or at the middle of the kindergarten school year. At the end of the kindergarten school year, there was no significant difference in the performance level of the OEK and non-OEK students. ³²
UPSTART	ETI (Evaluation and Training Institute)	A pretest-posttest control group design was used to assess UPSTART's impact on developing children's early literacy skills. The findings indicated that: 1) UPSTART participants had significantly better knowledge of lower case letters and lower case letter sounds compared to nonparticipants; and 2) UPSTART participants had significantly better ability to blend phonemes than nonparticipants. ³³
English Language Learner Software Licenses		No evaluation required by statute.
Title I Schools in Improvement - Paraeducators	State Board of Education	In accordance with Utah Code Section 53A-17a-167, the first annual evaluation report will be for the 2012-13 school year.

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