

USOE Report on
H.B. 500 – Education Reporting Efficiency
Amendments

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H.B. 500 directs the State Board of Education in consultation with representatives from school districts and charter schools to determine how to modify or eliminate reporting requirements. Additionally it directs the State Board to report to the Education Interim Committee on:

- Actions taken by the State Board; and
- Recommendations for the modification or elimination of reporting requirements.

This is a report of activities taken to this date. It should be noted that the examination of data and reporting is an ongoing activity of the State Office of Education. Additional suggestions and recommendations are welcome and should be channeled through Martell Menlove, Deputy Superintendent.

Whereas this is at least the third year in a row that a bill or intent language has addressed the issue of reporting to the State Office of Education, this report will provide some background on this issue as well as a report of most current actions. It is estimated that the Utah state Office of Education requires approximately 145 reports from most districts and charter schools. Of this total, we estimate that 73 are required as a result of participation in federal programs and federal funding, 58 are required in Utah Code, ten are required in State Board Rule, and an additional four are required by USOE business practices.

Federal Reporting

Federal reporting requirements are a major burden on USOE, districts, and charter schools. Federal reports are required in all areas where federal funding is received. Those programs with the greatest reporting requirements include CTE, Title 1, special education, and federal school lunch programs. These are also programs where a significant portion of the program is funded by federal funds. There are some small districts and charters that choose not to participate in some federal programs and, as such, are not held to the reporting requirements associated with those federal programs.

Legislative Required Reporting

Recognizing the need for additional accountability, the legislature continues to pass legislation requiring additional reporting. Generally this is associated with increased funding. Some of the 2012 General Session legislation that requires, or for which a legislator may seek, additional state, district, or charter school reporting includes:

- Correction Education Amendments – H.B. 12
- Statewide Adaptive Testing – H.B. 15
- Peer Assistance and Review Pilot Program – H.B. 115
- School Community Council Revisions – H.B. 128
- Online Education Survey – H.B. 149
- Grants for Math Teacher Training – H.B. 197
- Charter School Start-up Amendments – H.B. 397
- Education Reporting Efficiency Amendments – H.B. 500
- Youth Suicide Prevention – H.B. 510 (S1)
- Early Intervention Program – H.B. 513
- Public Education Employment Reform – S.B. 64 (S1)
- Paraeducator Funding – S.B. 81
- Grants for Online Testing – S.B. 97
- Procurement Amendments – S.B. 153 (S2)
- School Grading Amendments – S.B. 175
- Statewide Online Education Program Amendments – S.B. 178 (S1)
- Software of Special Needs Children – S.B. 196
- Math Materials Access Improvement Grant – S.B. 217 (S1)
- Smart School Technology Act – S.B. 248 (S2)
- Core Curriculum Standards Amendments – S.B. 287
- Utah Futures Program – S.B. 290 (S1)

As demonstrated by this list, most new reporting requirements are the result of new legislation.

State Board of Education Reporting

As the State Board of Education takes action to continue existing Board Rules, the State Office has been directed to eliminate any unnecessary reporting or reporting not required by Utah Code. As the State Board adopts new rules, typically at the direction of newly passed legislation, specific direction has been given by the Board to require only those reports included in legislation. This has resulted in some minor elimination of Board and USOE reporting requirements.

Consolidation of State Board/USOE Reporting

The Board and USOE have attempted to significantly consolidate and simplify many of the federal, state, and Board reporting requirements. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to annually submit a Utah Consolidated Application (UCA). UCA has multiple features that allow an LEA to apply for and receive funding from various federal and state sources through a single application. The UCA, although long and time consuming (especially for small districts and charters), reduces duplication, is comprehensive, is organized to maximize efficiency, allows for an LEA to “carry forward” plans and budgets from one year to the next, and allows for efficient and timely review and approval by USOE staff. Participants at a recently held meeting of district and charter school representatives, as mandated by H.B. 500, were very positive about the UCA and the efforts being made by USOE. They also recommended some additional changes to the UCA that will result in it being even more friendly and easy to complete.

School Performance Reports – 53A-3-602.5

Any discussion of reporting at this time would be incomplete without reference to School Performance Reports required in Utah Code. As was noted in the September 19, 2012 Education Interim Committee, the State Office, as well as many districts and charters are currently, partially out of compliance with this section of the Utah Code. We look forward to a healthy discussion identifying those critical data points that must be collected and reported. It is anticipated that this discussion will include a cost and benefit of data and recognize that the collection and reporting of data comes at some cost.

Recommendations

As required in H.B. 500 – Education Reporting Efficiency Amendments – district and charter leaders and administrators have been invited to make recommendations on modifying or eliminating reporting requirements. Additionally, representatives have discussed these issues and make the following recommendations.

1. As opportunities present themselves, continue to impact, as possible, the reporting requirements associated with federal programs and federal funding. This effort will require consistent and persistent communication with elected officials and the Department of Education.
2. Explore with legislators, the State Board, and USOE possible accountability measures that may be less burdensome than reports. Some suggestions include: random audits, random site visits, audited assurances, and “just trust us.”

3. Account for the cost of reporting requirements in LFA fiscal notes for proposed legislation. An accurate realization of the actual costs of reporting may modify some reporting requests.
4. Encourage the State Board of Education to continue their efforts to make the UCA as simple and user-friendly as possible.
5. Establish an advisory committee of actual UCA users. Advisory committee will include representatives from large districts, small districts, and charter schools.
6. Establish some ongoing minimum funding amounts that exempt the receiving LEA from reporting. It seems unfair to hold the smallest LEAs to the same accountability processes as large LEAs with greater resources and often larger amounts of specific program funding.
7. Continue to explore the consolidation of reporting outside the UCA. Possibly include vision screening and immunizations reported within existing SISs.
8. Consider the associated costs and values of reporting requirements. Districts and charters do not see “value” in some of the reports they are required to make. This can be part of the ongoing review of the School Performance Reports.
9. Assure that districts and charters will never be required to provide data that USOE already has or that another state agency collects.