

2013

# Education Task Force Report

Findings and  
Recommendations of  
the Utah Legislature's  
Education Task Force

Office of Legislative Research and  
General Counsel  
December 20, 2013



## Background

The Education Task Force was created by 2013 General Session S.B. 169 "Education Task Force" with the duty to review and make recommendations on public and higher education issues, including:

- long-term education policies to improve the state's economic prosperity;
- alignment of public and higher education with the state's economic goals and workforce needs;
- long-term priorities for funding; and
- economically competitive standards.

The task force is required to make a final report to the Education Interim Committee and the Executive Appropriations Committee before December 31, 2013, when the task force sunsets.

## Recommendations - Goals

### **Continue to support goals of SCR 5, 2013 General Session**

- 66% of adult population with a postsecondary degree or certificate by 2020
- 90% of students attain proficiency in reading by the end of third grade

### **Establish state goal**

- Top ten of states in reading and math proficiency as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the ACT
- Top ten of states in high school graduation as measured by state high school graduation rates calculated in accordance with U.S. Department of Education guidelines

## Recommendations - Strategies to Achieve Goals

### **Reading and Math Proficiency**

- Early-childhood education programs targeted to at-risk children
- Professional development to improve grades 4-8 math instruction
- Continued support for math instructional software

## **High School Completion**

- Increase counseling and support for at-risk high school students
- Increase focus on alignment of public and higher education with workforce needs and opportunities
- Provide continued support for the Intergenerational Poverty Initiative

## **Alignment of Education with Economic Development Goals and Workforce Needs**

- Support the creation of a governing board to provide policy direction for an integrated database of education and workforce data, as described in S.B. 34 "Governance of the Utah Education Workforce Alliance and Utah Futures," which was approved as a task force bill
- Support the development of career coaches/advisors in secondary schools to focus on alignment with students, parents, educational providers, and businesses
- Support an incentive program for students to complete Math 1050 before high school graduation

## **Governance**

- Support and adopt the Strategic Plan Framework for Public Education and the Key Elements Contributing to Student Achievement to guide policy making
- Support amendments to statute to define local school board "body corporate" references to clarify the roles and responsibilities of school board members
- Pursue and support devolution of control from the state level to encourage local governance
- Allow more flexibility in funding to empower school level decisions by principals, school community councils, and teachers

## **Professional Development and Collaboration**

- Adequate resources for professional development of teachers and principals
- Encourage the continued development of collaborative models in schools
- Explore teacher mentoring programs
- Focus professional development funding on local schools to ensure meeting site specific goals and needs

## **Testing**

- Continue to support and encourage computer adaptive testing methods

- Focus on meaningful and effective testing that results in beneficial higher education placements and future employment
- Focus on testing that correctly assesses the conditions for learning identified by the task force

### **Task Force Reauthorization**

- Reauthorize the Education Task Force for an additional year to study and make recommendations on:
  - the roles and responsibilities of the Legislature and other governing entities in public, higher, and career and technical education;
  - a long-term plan for education in the context of enrollment projections;
  - education funding at all levels, including ways to provide flexibility and to focus on outcomes;
  - higher education, including how to improve college completion rates;
  - appropriate measures of outcomes and expected levels of performance;
  - statutes or rules to eliminate that create distractions from or constraints on delivering world class education; and
  - strategies and policies to break down silos in Utah's education system.

# Strategic Plan Framework

## Education from the inside out

Utah Legislature Education Task Force 2013  
Concept courtesy of Maine DOE

### Parents/Community

- Community councils
- Commitment to child and education engagement
- Awareness and engagement for at-risk children
- Partnerships with non-profits and businesses to provide high-quality data-driven interventions
- Execution of standards and benchmarks



### Local schools

- Highly trained and empowered principals
- Meaningful teacher evaluations and mentoring programs
- School-specific professional development of teachers and administrators
- Commitment to family engagement
- Effective, appropriate services for students with special needs
- Addressing at-risk issues with parents and students

### School districts

- Commitment to accountability and community engagement
- Taxing Authority to meet local capital and programming needs
- Curriculum decisions consistent with state standards
- Ensure quality education regardless of geographic, demographic or socioeconomic realities
- Support school improvement initiated at the school level

### State board

- Commitment to diversity of education opportunities: online, charter and traditional public schools
- Setting standards and benchmarks
- Student advancement based on demonstration of mastery
- Accurate data collection/statewide accountability system and reports
- Career and workforce collaboration with higher education, UCAT and employers
- Independent audits to ensure cost efficiencies
- Traditional and alternative licensure of high quality teachers

### Legislature

- Equitable state resources for educating Utah's children.
- Support common themes of high achieving schools
- Pilot programs and initiatives to encourage and incentivize excellence
- Ensure accountable and responsive State and Local School Board elections
- Ensure maximum stability and investment returns for Permanent Trust Fund
- Resources for effective professional development and performance grants

## Key Elements Contributing to Student Achievement

<b>INPUTS</b>			
<b>State Board of Education</b>		<b>Utah Foundation</b>	<b>Principals (High Achieving Schools)</b>
<b>Interventions</b>	Targeted interventions that meet individual student needs	Early childhood education targeted to low-income and at-risk populations  High school interventions targeted to at-risk students  High school interventions to prepare students for college and career	Targeted interventions provided to students who need additional help or time in learning a skill  Additional time and resources
	High quality professional development  High quality instruction for all students	Teacher quality and professional development	Professional learning communities  Data-driven instruction
<b>Leadership</b>	Strong school leadership		High quality principals
<b>Assessments</b>	Appropriate assessments inform data-driven decision making	Standards-based assessment	Data-driven instruction
<b>Parents</b>			Parent outreach

<b>CONDITIONS</b>		
	<b>Center for the School of the Future</b>	<b>Principals (High Achieving Schools)</b>
<b>Clear Expectations</b>	A clear understanding of high expectations for academic and behavior performance	High expectations for all
<b>Building Skills</b>	Presence of fundamental skills that give the student hope that expectations can be achieved if provided sufficient opportunities	
<b>Rewards and Recognition</b>	A reasonable likelihood that efforts to meet the high expectations will be recognized and rewarded	Encouragement of, incentives for, and reinforcement of academic achievement and appropriate social behavior.
<b>Positive Relationships</b>	The presence of an adult who can be trusted to provide help and support, if needed	

## Findings

### Academic Achievement of Utah Students

The 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows:

- Utah students overall perform close to the U.S. average in grade 4 and grade 8 reading and math.
- Similarly, white students in Utah perform close to the U.S. average for white students.
- Hispanic students in Utah perform significantly lower than the U.S. average for Hispanic students, except in grade 8 reading, where there is no significant difference in Utah and U.S. scores.

In 2013, all students in grade 11 took the ACT. The percent of Utah students meeting ACT college readiness benchmarks is:

- 63%, English;
- 38%, math;
- 45%, reading;
- 36%, science; and
- 24%, composite.

In 2013, Utah had the highest ACT composite score among the 11 states where at least 95% of the students take the ACT.

### Accountability

Principals of alternative schools explained how the role and mission of an alternative school results in a failing grade under the current school grading system. The student population in an alternative school is highly mobile, with students transferring in and out throughout the school year. Students enroll in an alternative school, because they are failing to achieve in a regular public school. When they enroll in an alternative school, they are significantly behind in credits. If a student catches up in the alternative school, the student may transfer back to the regular high school. The principals suggested other methods and criteria to use in calculating an alternative school's grade.

## **Alignment of Public and Higher Education with the State's Economic Development Goals and Workforce Needs**

Projections for the number and percentage of occupations requiring postsecondary training vary based on the method used to calculate the projections.

- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Utah Department of Workforce Services make 10-year projections of occupations, and an educational level is assigned to each occupation based on legal or licensing requirements or the typical educational level to gain entry into the occupation. Using that method of assigning educational levels to occupations, 31% of the national workforce in 2020 is expected to be employed in occupations requiring postsecondary education or training.
- The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) projects education demand by looking at the actual educational levels of individuals employed within an occupation. Using the actual educational levels of employees in occupations yields a higher level of postsecondary education demand than the method of assigning educational levels to occupations that is used by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The CEW is working with the state to refine education demand based on the state's economic development targets.

The Utah Data Alliance is a multiagency consortium organized to develop and maintain a comprehensive database to enable the examination of educational progress and outcomes over time, from preschool, through K-12 and postsecondary public education, and into the workforce. Development of the database was funded by a \$9.6 million federal grant. Policy direction and funding for the continued operation and maintenance of the database, including the development of dashboards to make data available to the public, are required.

## **Factors Affecting Student Achievement**

An analysis by the *Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst (OLFA)* of the relationship between various factors and average NAEP scores for each state indicates that the relationship between student achievement and spending per pupil is not as strong as the relationship between student achievement and demographic factors including:

- the percentage of single parent households;
- the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree; and
- personal income per capita.

See the appendix for scatter plots of the OLFA's analysis.



**Education stakeholders** were invited to report on and discuss the key elements contributing to student achievement. Many different factors were identified by education stakeholders. Factors that were most frequently mentioned include:

- adequate funding;
- high-quality instruction;
- high-quality professional development and time for professional collaboration;
- targeted interventions that meet individual student needs, which may include extended learning time opportunities, digital learning tools, reduced class size, mentors, counselors, and early intervention; and
- local control and flexibility in the implementation of programs and use of resources.

**Principals of high-achieving schools** serving a significant population of at-risk students were invited to report on and discuss the practices implemented in their schools that resulted in high achievement. Those practices include the following:

- School principal - An effective principal is instrumental in creating a culture where all students are expected to succeed. An effective principal puts systems in place that create accountability for teachers and students and, to the extent possible, make parents accountable for their children's learning. Those systems involve an extensive sharing of data.
- High expectations for all – A high-achieving school has a mission or vision that includes the belief that all students can achieve.
- Support for positive behavior – A high-achieving school systematically encourages, provides incentives for, and reinforces academic achievement and appropriate social behavior.
- Professional learning communities – Ongoing professional development occurs through professional learning communities where team members learn from each other. Teacher teams collaboratively develop lesson plans and assessments, review student data, and plan interventions for students needing additional help.
- Data-driven instruction – Time is scheduled for teachers and instructional coaches to review student assessment data and adjust instruction based on the data.
- Targeted intervention – Targeted interventions are provided to students who need additional help or time in learning a skill. High-quality instructional aides or certified teachers provide instruction to small groups of students during the regular school day. Extended day programs, which provide an additional hour of instruction before or after school or an additional half-day for a kindergarten student, are available to invited students

- Parent outreach – Parent outreach strategies may include: 1) calling or visiting parents of students who are falling behind and eliciting their help; 2) regular weekly or monthly communications or newsletters; and 3) daily access to library books to be read at home.
- Use of school resources – Federal and state money made available to schools are used to meet critical needs. Federal money includes Title I funds and School Improvement Grants. In the 2012-13 school year, each school received Title I funds in the amount of \$445 to \$942 per low income student. Over a three-year period beginning in 2010, two schools each received a federal School Improvement Grant of \$2.3 million. State resources include funds from the K-3 Reading Improvement, School Trust Lands, and Early Intervention programs.

The **Utah Foundation** interviewed education officials in Utah's peer states and benchmark states to find out what programs and practices those states are using to improve student achievement. Peer states are those that have student demographics similar to Utah and typically have higher NAEP scores than Utah. Benchmark states consistently have higher NAEP scores and higher per pupil spending. The Utah Foundation research identified the following practices and programs responsible for improving student achievement:

- Teacher quality and professional development – high-quality teacher induction and mentoring, research-based professional development, personalized training that addresses teacher and student needs, and professional learning communities and learning walks
- Standards-based assessment – rigorous standards, alignment of assessment with standards, student growth models, data-driven assessment that provides immediate feedback, and competitive cut points on assessments
- Early childhood education targeted to low-income and at-risk populations – high-quality preschool and full-day kindergarten
- High school interventions targeted to at-risk high school students – personalized counseling, alternative routes to graduation, flexible scheduling and graduation requirements, leveraging proven national third-party organizations/programs, and early warning systems for proactive interventions
- High school interventions to prepare students for college and careers – rigorous high school academic standards, more options to gain college credit in high school, counseling for students and parents regarding college admissions and costs, options introduced in middle school, and partnerships with third parties, such as industry organizations, business, and higher education

## Funding

Utah per pupil funding of \$6,452 in FY 2010 was the lowest among the states.

The costs to increase per pupil funding and the related income tax rate increases and impacts, as estimated by the OLFA, are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

### Cost and Impacts of Per Pupil Funding Alternatives

	Next Highest State - Idaho	U.S. Average	Washington, D.C.
Difference from Utah	\$648 per pupil	\$4,647 per pupil	\$14,458 per pupil
Cost	\$365 million	\$2.6 billion	\$8.1 billion
Estimated income tax rate change	5% to 5.7%	5% to 9.8%	5% to 19.8%
Estimated effective tax rate change for a family of three	2.9% to 3.5%	2.9% to 7.3%	2.9% to 16.5%
Estimated household impact for a family of three	\$516	\$7,097	\$19,445

In 2010, Utah ranked 29<sup>th</sup> among the states in state and local support for K-12 education per \$1,000 of personal income.

In 2011, Utah ranked 16<sup>th</sup> among the states in state and local support for higher education per \$1,000 of personal income.

In 2010, Utah ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> among the states in the number of higher education degrees awarded per \$100,000 in expenditures.

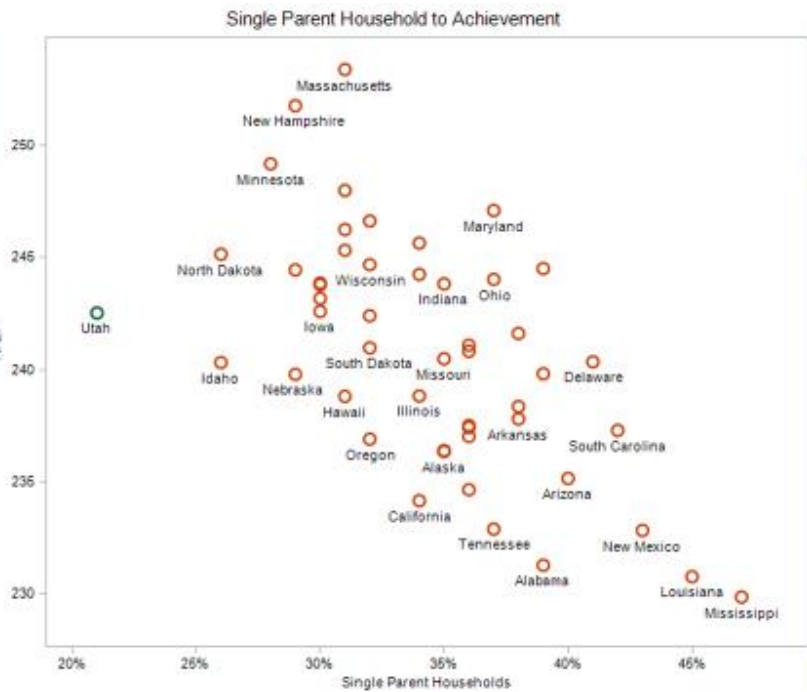
## Governance

Under current law, a local school board is designated as a body corporate, which may create uncertainty about the role of an individual member of a local school board.

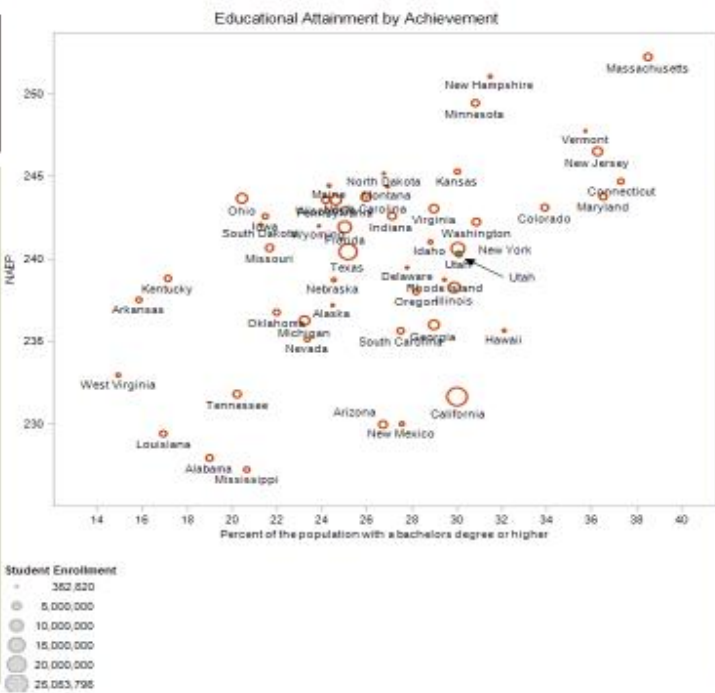
Various members of the public assert that the State Board of Education is not accountable to the public or parents for the board's actions because of the method of selecting board members. Two candidates for each open State Board of Education seat are selected by the governor from individuals nominated and recruited by committees. Voters may choose among the two candidates selected by the governor.

# APPENDIX

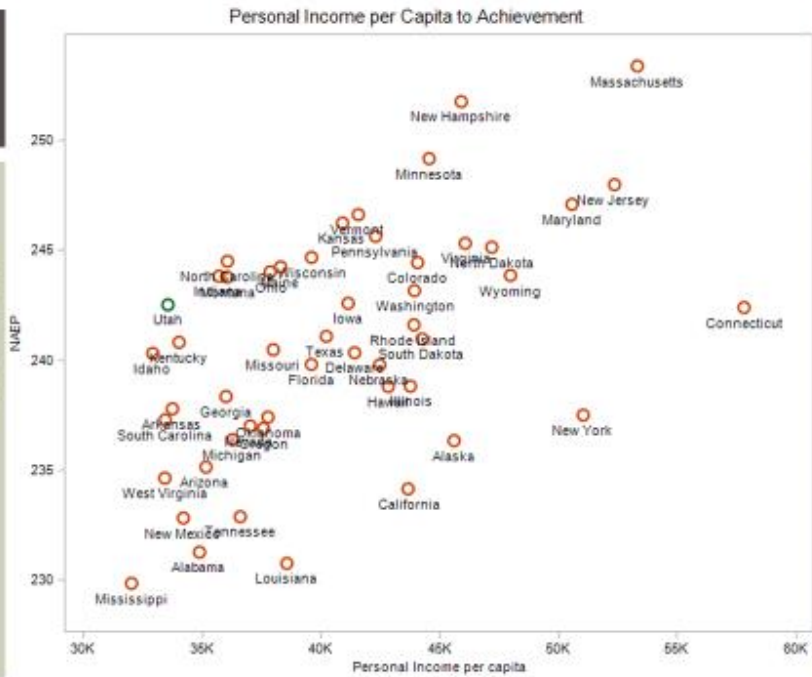
**OLDS**  
SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS  
(%)



**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**  
(%)



PERSONAL INCOME PER CAPITA



NAEP SCORES

