To facilitate today's discussion, the chairs provided presenters a list of three priority questions and seven other questions that they would like presenters to address, as applicable. For your convenience, presenters have provided written responses.

Perspective of Principals and Teachers

Education Interim Committee

June 18, 2014

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STACEY BRIGGS, PRINCIPAL
OGDEN HIGH, OGDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

For teachers, especially in secondary, three key elements need to be cultivated: A teacher must be passionate and knowledgeable about their subject, adhere to the highest standard of professional conduct, and be "a kid magnet" creating high interest and motivation for students.

Principals create the environment for these types of teachers to thrive, by recruiting and retaining teachers with these characteristics. They must create a collaborative environment and hold teachers accountable for results in student achievement while working alongside them to overcome the obstacles that are present in each individual school environment.

What can the legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

The legislature has taken some steps such as having the ACT test given to all students in the 11th grade, because it will give us a target that allows us to measure ourselves against other states. While education is a critical state function, we can work to make our state stand out in performance when compared. The elements that lead to a high level of student preparation for post-secondary education include high-quality classroom instruction, involvement in activities both academic and extra-curricular and ways to help students individually at whatever level they are performing. Sufficient resources that support these elements will help.

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

Schools that use models where students receive assistance and support in staying on-track for graduation, college applications and funding lead more minority students to succeed. These interventions should start earlier and be supported at all levels, including funding time for planning the transitions for this interventions from one school to the next as students advance. Parents need support in learning how to support their students in aiming for meeting these achievement levels.

Are Utah core standards for English language arts and mathematics sufficiently rigorous?

The move to the new core has increased rigor at the secondary level. Full implementation of this core will lead to increased academic rigor in all levels. Teachers at my school have been working diligently to work on implementing these standards of increased rigor so that our students can increase achievement. I urge legislators to stay the course on our Utah Standards so that teachers can see the results of their efforts.

For secondary school principals and math teachers, are the Secondary Math I, II, and III courses a better way to teach math than a more traditional sequence of math courses, i.e., algebra 1, geometry, algebra II, etc.? Do you have any suggested changes for the secondary math curriculum?

The integrated math core was an unusual choice for the state compared to other states and has created challenges in implementation. However, the integrated strands reflect more of the way that math instruction is conducted internationally. If we continue to persevere, we have an opportunity to excel in math instruction, especially if we look to a STEM focus in our educational work. This choice can be a good one IF we support it with resources and expertise.

AMIE CAMPBELL, PRINCIPAL
OGDEN PREPARATORY ACADEMY

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

A culture of data driven evaluation of every student for designing supports. If a teacher doesn't target individual student needs and continually teaches to the whole group, student achievement suffers. So teachers that embrace change, value data and constantly strive to grow personally and professionally will result in student achievement.

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

Identify the difference between teacher accountability and stressful teacher demands. School grading, testing and the great unknown impact teacher morale and the entire educational field. Motivating, validating and growing teachers is getting harder with increasing requirements. Teacher accountability is required to improve education but a self-reflection and personal growth component are needed to build moral and teacher retention. Teachers are tired and fading quickly. Transparency in testing and a reduction of unrealistic expectations. How do you prepare a class of students for a final examination that you have no guidelines for?

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

Treat them equally and celebrate their culture. Have the same expectations of all cultures, but understand the different modalities through which students learn. Build a community that is diverse on purpose.

CARROL FIRMAGE, TEACHER/HUMANITIES DEPT. CHAIR
BEEHIVE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

High performing teachers are teachers who are empowered to teach—who are not saddled with unnecessary bureaucratic overhead and intrusive oversight, especially by those who really don't know anything about teaching.

High performing teachers are highly trained and dedicated professionals who want to be treated as such. They want to be given the independence to use their skills and training to meet the individual needs of students.

As highly trained professionals, teachers need well-defined realistic goals, and the means and time to accomplish those goals.

High performing teachers are talented people who could be successful in any number of different careers, but who chose teaching and continue to teach because they love learning and love teaching.

Perhaps most importantly, high performing teachers are not biological machinery. Neither are high performing students. There is no one-size-fits-all mechanical way to teach or learn. The more we try to impose an industrial production model on education, the more we will fail to educate. The most talented teachers and students will be the first to bristle at being treated like machinery and products. The most talented teachers weary at being demeaned, unappreciated and micro-managed and leave the system. The best students, if they can afford it, will leave for private schools where they can receive individual attention commensurate with their ability.

When I asked my own children who are 16 and 18 years old to reflect on their best teachers and what attributes they had, they both said the same thing independently of each other: the best teachers are those who know their subject matter and are excited about teaching it. They convey a passion for learning and entice the student to WANT to learn.

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

Respect. I as a dedicated, highly educated, competent expert take great exception to someone telling me how I am failing to do my job. I take exception as a teacher of the humanities to hearing on an annual basis that the humanities are a road to nowhere. The first thing that the legislature must do, if they want Utah education to flourish, is to respect teachers, and I as a teacher do not feel respected by this body.

One measurable and meaningful measure of respect is what you pay me. I am not properly compensated for what I do and I feel it as a sign of disrespect. It is also a very real and practical problem for me as a wage-earner. It hurts when I see the average salary that someone with a master's degree should make and compare it with the fact that I make less than half of that, just because I choose to teach. It hurts when I asked my 16 year-old daughter this question, and she answered it in two words: pay more. She feels directly the difficulty teachers have in making ends meet. I have had to take a second job to help, but that wouldn't be the case if I were paid what I would be with my education in another field. How much more effective I could be if I felt respected by parents, students and society in general for teaching.

Let me tell you of a teacher at my school who has recently found herself as the sole supporter of her two children. She has had to take an extra job at a hospital working from 3 a.m. to 8 a.m. She then comes to teach from 8:10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is not right for someone with a master's degree to have to work two jobs just to make ends meet for her family just because she is an educator. When asked about why certain people in state positions can claim the salaries they do, the answer is always so that we can retain the best. Why does this never apply to teachers?

Hopefully you saw the article in last Friday's (June 13, 2014) Salt Lake Tribune that discussed per-pupil spending in Utah and other states in the nation. The average per-pupil spending in the nation is $10,608, which is 70% more than Utah's at $6,193! Yes, we have more children to educate, but we are near the bottom third in the nation in the percentage of our income invested in education per capita.

Doing more with less, which is what Governor Herbert suggested recently, is not realistic. I am already doing that. I bristle at the governor's notion, that somehow I as a teacher am not pulling my weight.

Smaller class size. There is no way that even the best teacher in the world can give individual attention to 40 students. I am fortunate in that class size in my school is capped at 25, but when I go to professional development meetings, I am shocked by the class sizes all teachers are asked to deal with. I met a teacher last week who will have over 50 students in her debate class this fall. All the language arts teachers I spoke with had at least 35 to 40 students per class. How can a teacher be expected to grade that many essays in a timely fashion with real constructive criticism?

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

It is difficult, because the achievement gap is in large part due to family and cultural factors, which go beyond the school and it is difficult for a school to address. But in general, we need more programs directed at actively integrating and assisting minorities. Unfortunately, Utah has taken a rather hostile stance on immigration and does not encourage participation.

Imagine yourself, going to school in Tehran and being confronted every day with slogans about Iran being a Muslim nation. Imagine what that does to you. How interested would you be in integrating? If you want to change the achievement gap, then you have to address the feeling of alienation.

Whereas in my school, minorities are genuinely welcome. The students have role models from their own community, and minority students are among the highest performing of all our students. I think that has to do with a large minority population at my school, but also a high percentage of the faculty. 35% of my faculty and staff are minorities. When the students have role models like these, they realize they can succeed themselves.

Are schools required to administer too many tests? If so, which tests should be eliminated?

In teaching as in everything else, you get what you are ultimately looking for. If you are looking for test performance, then teachers will teach to that performance. But tests do not represent the way the real world works. They are highly artificial and not indicative of real world success. If you want students who are genuinely independent minded and capable of critical thinking (future entrepreneurs, etc.), then test performance should not be the chief criterion for student or teacher success.

An alternative measure of student writing skills, for example, might be the number of students who successfully contribute to an online blog, newspaper or some other form of social media. How many students have a poem published in a recognized poetry journal? Shouldn't that be a way to also measure success? Success might be measured in terms of original, creative work accomplished, i.e. a collection of essays in process. How many students are selected for national science fairs or who receives recognition for work done with mentors on research might be a criterion in science.

Another problem is that testing is particularly bad at either end of the bell curve. The students who are least prepared for whatever reason, economic background, ethnicity, or individual learning challenges will have the hardest time performing successfully, not because they don't have the ability, but because they need a different kind of teacher attention and preparation. At the other end of the bell curve, the most gifted students will likewise be ill-served by an education built around standardized testing because they are beyond standard and should also be given correspondingly different opportunities for learning. There are some students who are intellectually able to move at a much faster pace and shouldn't have to be held back by a system designed for the average student.

Ultimately, the following quote from John Holt explains why standardized testing doesn't really help, "...the anxiety children feel at constantly being tested, their fear of failure, punishment, and disgrace, severely reduces their ability both to perceive and to remember, and drives them away from the material being studied into strategies for fooling teachers into thinking they know what they really don't know."

I believe the SAGE tests are better than the CRT, and that schools should limit their testing to just this one. Ideally, however, we wouldn't have standardized testing at all.

If each of your students had a laptop or tablet computer, how would teaching and learning be different in your classroom or school?

Each of my school's students this year was issued an ipad. There were many great applications for it, and I found the ipads extremely helpful in the classroom. I was able to use a large variety of free texts in language arts without having to purchase classroom sets. My students were able to do research in class, or even look up a quick answer to someone's question on the spot. Many teachers complain that scheduling the computer lab for a class was difficult. I never had to worry about that. My students could do projects, papers, assignments, etc. all in my classroom with their ipads. They could also do oral presentations on the projector from their ipads. There is so much more they can do with them, we have only just begun to experience their potential.

But I believe one of the best general results for our students was that they were able to take personal control of their assignments and grades. I teach 10-12th grades, and instead of always asking me when assignments were due, or if they were missing something, they could look it up themselves and find out. I believe the skills in learning what they need to do and when they need to do it are invaluable as they move into adult life. The ipads helped them become more competent with technology and with that competency, make it useful in their everyday lives.

What instructional software is used in your classroom or school? How is it used? How effective is the instructional software in improving student achievement?

In my classroom, we used flash-cards for vocabulary, electronic assignments and quizzes, and free books for language arts to name a few. We did SAGE practice tests on the ipads as well. I know other teachers made extensive use of tutorials and simulation software.

In competency-based education, a student advances to the next learning level based on the student's mastery of certain skills and knowledge. What instructional or organizational changes would be required to implement competency-based education at your school for all students? What are the challenges in implementing competency-based education?

I think competency-based education would be an improvement over what we have now (see answer to #1 in this section). It would be easier to implement in my school than in a large district as it is small—only about 300 students and we know each of our students well. One of the challenges would be scheduling since we are so small. Would all the students get the classes they need given our limited staff? That would be my biggest concern.

We already have a flexible schedule for our seniors. They are required to take at least 3 classes their senior year, but for the rest of the day they either go to SLCC and do concurrent enrollment, take classes online at the school or some of them have jobs in an area they want to go into. This has allowed our seniors to make good use of their senior year. I would see it as positive progression, especially for the really bright students who can then progress at their level without becoming too bored.

I think teachers and administrators would have to be trained as to what exactly competency means in any given area of study. Students could come out with a wide variety of skills, but all deemed competent. But being allowed to show one's ability in several different ways is an excellent idea as I said in the response to standardized tests.

If we were to go to a competency-based system, I would hope that schools and teachers would not be punished for students who take longer to accomplish the desired mastery. Some students just need longer to learn material. Just because they are not mature enough, they have special needs or they require more time should not mean that the school or teacher has failed to do his/her job. So I would recommend caution in putting time restraints on the school or student.

Are Utah core standards to English language arts and mathematics sufficiently rigorous? Do you have any suggested modifications to those standards?

I don't know about the math, but I can address English language arts. I think the new standards are better than the old ones. I believe if students truly can accomplish all that is set out in the standards by 12th grade, then they will be better suited to whatever higher education path they may choose. Writing is THE major area where I see students are lacking real world skills. Writing can only get better when students have repeated practice with constructive feedback. Teachers don't have the time to do that with 250 students. English language arts skills will increase with smaller class sizes.

Is the new computer-adaptive assessment system an improvement over the criterion-referenced tests? Please explain why it is or is not an improvement. Will the new system change the way you deliver instruction?

Yes. The criterion-referenced tests were easy for most of my students to pass, and it is questionable whether or not they really had the skills and knowledge it was testing. It was possible to just guess and do fairly well. The computer-adaptive assessment system is harder to guess on. I felt rather lost this last school year as to how to prepare my students to take this test. I did a practice test with them and many of the assignments on the SAGE portal, but I don't know if that was effective or not. We will see when we get the test results in November. Of course any time a new system is put into place, there is going to be a learning curve, but my students had so many questions about the new system that I could not

answer. They did complain about the length of the texts they had to read to answer the questions, and I know that test fatigue set in where by the end they just didn't care to read anymore and frankly guessed on a lot of questions. Even my high achievers said they tired of the reading and just wanted to finish it.

Will the new system change how I teach? In some ways—I have already added more informational texts to my curriculum. I will spend more time this year in teaching the students how to read 2-3 different texts and then be able to compare and/or synthesize what the texts say. These are real-life skills that I think will serve them well in the future.

SHERI JENSEN, SECOND GRADE TEACHER
MAPLETON ELEMENTARY, NEBO SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

Students need to feel as if they are a person, not just a number.   They need to know they matter, what is going on in their lives is of interest to the teachers and administrators. Students need to feel as if the teachers and administrators care about whether they succeed. Are the teachers and administrators invested? Is the material relevant to future knowledge?

Unfortunately, our colleges are so hard to get into and the education programs are even more difficult, we are hiring teachers who do not know what it feels like to struggle, to not understand a concept. Typically, the new teachers who are coming from the universities are straight A's students and have a difficult time understanding or connecting with struggling students.

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

Unfortunately, the new evaluation tool just being implemented may have an undesirable effect. Many teachers see it as too stressful to remain in the profession. Some of these are teachers that should leave, however, a greater share of them are good teachers who feel the pay is not worth the stress. In the summer, they are forced to get another job to make ends meet, and then they have to take classes to maintain their license. They seldom are home prior to 6:00 at night during the school year and you can often find their cars at their schools on the weekend too.

Is it possible this tool can be used for those teachers who are considered substandard as a way to help them improve? I also wonder how realistic it is to expect administrators, with their ever increasing demands, to monthly chart each teacher on those indicators. A good administrator has better observation tools to "take the temperature" of a classroom, than to be checking boxes as to whether the teacher has all of the learning goals posted for the day.
Due to lack of additional steps, I have not had a pay raise since my 27th year. I realize there are some teachers who should be gone after 27 years, and some that should be gone after 2. However, there are some teachers who still love what they are doing and are great teachers, who would actually earn more by retiring. Somehow we need to take that into consideration.

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

I feel somehow we need to find a way to create one-on-one learning opportunities for students to make connections and find success. I think traditionally, one-on-one help is more difficult to find in areas with high concentrations of minority students, they tend to be from multi income homes, so parents are not as likely to be able to spend time in the classroom or help at home. These are also traditionally families who cannot afford to provide tutoring experiences for their children. Oftentimes, these students fall behind early on in their education and begin to feel hopeless and give up. I believe early intervention with teachers who care can make a difference.

SUZANNE KIMBALL, PRINCIPAL
SALEM JR. HIGH, NEBO SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

- *Clear learning targets*
- *Formative assessments of those targets*
- *Data analysis done on the formative assessments to identify students who need reteaching or enrichment*
- *Time for remediation/enrichment within the school day*

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

- *Support efforts of schools and teachers to focus on learning targets and tracking learning progress by standard which is done through formative rather than summative assessments better*
- *Increase funding on initiatives to give teachers more training and professional development days at their contract pay*

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

- *Work toward a guaranteed and viable curriculum where every student and their parents know the standards and how well their individual student performs on those standards*
- *Remediation efforts need to happen within the school day so all students not only have access, but are required to be retaught*

Are schools required to administer too many tests? If so, which tests should be eliminated?

- *Yes. We would get rid of DIBELS. They can assess the same reading comprehension skills with SAGE end of level testing and interim tests.*
- *The writing portion of SAGE needs to be cut down to a single prompt which will still produce adequate data, especially if alternating prompts each year. This will save the state considerable amount of money.*

If each of your students had a laptop or tablet computer, how would teaching and learning be different in your classroom or school?

- *Potential costs would have to be addressed first--tech support (both structure and hardware), staff development, ongoing money to update tablets, etc., and purchasing an online learning management system.*
- *Tech support would have to be in each school. If tech support is lost, learning on computers stops.*
- *Procedural and policy changes would also need to be addressed.*
- *This would depend on teacher ability. If teachers receive the training needed to effectively use this technology in their instruction, they would use it more often and with purpose.*

What instructional software is used in your classroom or school? How is it used? How effective is the instructional software in improving student achievement?

- *Waterford, Imagine Learning, Success Maker, SRI, READ 180*
- *Our data shows that no discernible difference is seen when instructional software is used.*

In competency-based education a student advances to the next learning level based on the student's mastery of certain skills and knowledge. What instructional or organizational changes would be required to implement competency-based education at your school for all students? What are the challenges in implementing competency-based education?

- *First, we need a better tracking system for competency-based reporting in Aspire or other grading programs.*
- *The challenges stem primarily from changing an A, B, C system to a Mastery, Proficient, Emerging system of reporting. Even when philosophically the educator knows through the research that competency-based is a more accurate reflection of learning, the structures in reporting becomes such a large roadblock that it prevents movement to the better system.*
- *Also, different types of subjects require different reporting systems. For instance, a math or English class might be able to convert their assessments onto a new system, but performing arts standards might be more difficult and require more thought.*
- *Structurally we also need to ensure that the standards are uniform among school subject teams and then district subject teams to ensure the curriculum. This has to be accomplished collaboratively and finding the time and funding is difficult.*
- *Universities and colleges would then also need to recognize the competency-based report cards/diplomas.*
- *In order for full implementation, schools would have to overhaul their entire scheduling and advancement system which would result in fluid and additional FTEs to accommodate for student transfers to appropriate levels of classes.*

Are Utah core standards for English language arts and mathematics sufficiently rigorous?

- *Yes, but if those standards are not converted to learning targets/competencies, the rigor is hard to determine.*

For secondary school principals and math teachers, are the Secondary Math I, II, and III courses a better way to teach math than a more traditional sequence of math courses, i.e., algebra 1, geometry, algebra II, etc.? Do you have any suggested changes for the secondary math curriculum?

- *We are heading into our fourth year and only the second year of Secondary Math III. With that said, it is too soon to evaluate fully impact of the new approach. We have spend many hours and funds which we would be negligent for spending if we don't allow full implementation.*
- *There are some alignment issues with honors math course that need refinement.*

Is the new computer-adaptive assessment system an improvement over the criterion-referenced tests? Please explain why it is or is not an improvement. Will the new system change the way you deliver instruction?

- *It is too early to say how the systems compare. The hope is that students will be more accurately assessed because of the adaptive nature of the test.*
- *Initially, the new assessment poses problems with time. Students were taking a lot longer on the test than before which causes scheduling problems. The increased length of time also created student frustration and burnout during testing sessions.*

JULIE MARSH, SCIENCE TEACHER
NORTH SUMMIT HIGH, NORTH SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

Performance characteristics of a principal include those that support and help effective teachers. They work with the faculty and drive the school environment towards the importance of academics where data is used to make decisions and re-evaluate the progress of the school. They do not make all the decisions by themselves and use the ideas of faculty to bring about desired changes with student education.

The performance characteristics of teachers to bring about high student achievement include those who are willing to use data, work with others; faculty and administration, and are eager to make changes that does not follow the traditional teaching model. With technology, these teachers must adapt to new changes all the time.

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

Provide more money to support the technology needs within the school district that is not specified specifically for certain technology software or instruments. For example, within the last year, there was a bill proposed by Speaker Becky Lockhart to supply all students with a hand-held device. For some school who do not have the wireless infrastructure, the money would be better spent to hardwire the school and then supply some ipads. What good is it to give the schools the technology when they do not have the basic structure to support it? Teachers, students and parents will become frustrated when their students are unable to get onto the wireless system because the bandwidth is not big enough to support all the additional technology users. On the other hand, what about districts like ours who already have handheld device where we are one-to-one. Do we get penalized when the new ipads are handed out and our school does not receive anything because we made the sacrifice to purchase them 2 years ago? As each district is at different steps along the way, provide the funding for them to move in a step-by-step fashion to bring the technology along for the best results.

Professional Development- With all the new software programs available, it becomes impossible for teachers to prep for their class and grade papers each day and then have time to learn all the new systems/programs out there. Instead of allocating districts to use days within the current school year to provide professional development to teachers, and being that the new SAGE testing system has taken even many more days out of the current curriculum as compared to the CRT's, students will lose more valuable learning time within the classroom. Professional development needs to be of a top priority for our school systems and provided outside of the current allocated school days. Teachers need to have training in how to use technology and ways to implement it especially since everything is coming to them at a fast rate.

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

We need to quit addressing this issue as minorities and white students. There are many white children who are falling behind. With so many broken homes today, all races of students are struggling especially since parents work such long hours outside the home.

For students who are falling behind, more time for intervention during the school day as well as remedial classes need to be provided especially when you look at core subjects such as math and English. But this becomes a difficult situation for school districts, but even more difficult is the small-rural districts who receive little funding. It is difficult to stretch the budget when funds are so limited. In a small district, we have to have a science, math and English teacher even if the classes are not filled to capacity. And when that teachers is responsible to teach all the science classes to all students within the school, when does the teacher have time to teach additional classes for those students who are struggling? If students are expected to achieve and move at an effective pace, there needs to be additional help available for students.

As money is always a concern with education, throwing more money to solve problems is not always a solution. But, having adequate money to provide the necessary fixes is important. When looking at the amount of money spent per student in the state of Utah as according to the Census Bureau, we are 50th place out of 50 states. We are not providing enough funding to school district to meet the needs of our students. And what is our future based on? Our students who will occupy those positions that you and I will need as we age such as health care, business to maintain our economy, technology and more.

Are schools required to administer too many tests? If so, which tests should be eliminated?
There are many tests required for students today. But which one should be eliminated?

Probably none. However, should there be alterations to any of the current tests? Yes, the new SAGE test. As I am a teacher/testing director in a small district, I am currently aware that the SAGE test took 8 days for the English/Language Arts classes, 4 days for the science and 5 days for the math. And since we are required to use the SAGE test in both the fall and the spring, double all the numbers. Sixteen days will be taken out of the English curriculum each year, 8 days out of the science curriculum and 10 days out of the math curriculum as compared to 2 -3 days each year for CRT's in years prior. The length of the SAGE test needs to be shortened.

We need to reduce the writing prompt to just one and reduce the amount of reading with each one. The math test needs to be reduced especially since there was 60 questions that had multiple pieces within each question. From my perspective as a testing director of our school, it appeared that the students took the test very serious the firsts two days, but the students started to rush to complete the test by the third day or third hour of the test. We need to seek a quality, testing tool and not one that tests for extensive hours.

If each of your students had a laptop or tablet computer, how would teaching and learning be different in your classroom or school?

It is obvious that teaching and learning changes dramatically within the classroom when technology is involved. For some teachers, they have access to online tutorials or make them. They can also provide students assignments online and students can work on them even if they are unable to attend school that day. Textbooks are now portable and students do not have to lug around large numbers of books or forget them at school. Students have access to a wealth of information within seconds and learn how to find information quickly and for other problems. As stated earlier, our district has been one-to-one for 2 years and our teaching styles have changed. I have a website where all my lectures are recorded and posted online as well as all the assignments. Students can listen to a missed lecture or even review a lecture if they didn't understand something. My IEP students and their parents especially love my website since it allowed them the opportunity to review the lecture at home and add additional comments to their notes. Parents were relieved that students could review my lecture and didn't have to struggle to learn the information since it had been years since they had the class.

It has also been an advantage to our athletes who travel long distances to ball games and leave school early in the school day. While athletes are riding on the bus or waiting for their game, they can jump on my website and listen to a lecture and then do the assignment and turn it in electronically. Now students do not get behind and stay caught up. But more than that, technology has been used extensively in our school where teachers have created virtual field trips, webquests, use simulations that would otherwise take students years and years to see the results, do math practice drills, use Gaggle (like Canvas) where students can blog and participate in discussion boards as well as submit papers electronically.

What instructional software is used in your classroom or school? How is it used? How effective is the instructional software in improving student achievement?

First let me say that anytime you use technology in the classroom, student effort and time on task does increase. Students are drawn to the technology and enjoy manipulating it. But without good teaching techniques, the technology

tool may not be effective. This is where great professional development would be helpful to extend and support the ideas of what teachers already have. I use:

- *Gaggle: Electronic paper submission, blogging and discussion boards.*
- *Gizmos: Science and math simulations*
- *ixl.com: math instruction and drills*
- *Khan Academy/teacher created lectures*
- *Mastery Connect: Online student testing program*
- *UTIPS: (Soon to be SAGE formative)*

In competency-based education a student advances to the next learning level based on the student's mastery of certain skills and knowledge. What instructional or organizational changes would be required to implement competency-based education at your school for all students? What are the challenges in implementing competency-based education?

Competency-based education is a great way of educating a student. This would certainly ensure that a student has the required knowledge to advance to the next class. Within our current educational organization, technology would be needed to an extensive amount to keep students at the different levels. There would need to be more professional development in how to implement and sustain this type of curriculum. No longer would a student sit in class and just try to get a D- because it is considered passing. Now the student has a vested interest in being responsible for their education.

Are Utah core standards for English language arts and mathematics sufficiently rigorous? Do you have any suggested modifications to those standards?

Yes. For right now, there are big gaps between grades especially within the math common core. When the younger students in elementary who started with the common core become high schoolers, the gaps we are currently seeing in student proficiently levels will be reduced. But, in our current situation, there are big gaps within the math curriculum where students are being pushed into math I, II or III where they are not ready. Teachers are noticing the gaps in the students education and are trying to fill in the missing concepts. But as they are required to teach their own curriculum, this has become time intensive and one where teachers are struggling to complete the core within a year which was already heavily increased by the state.

For secondary school principals and math teachers, are the Secondary Math I, II, and III courses a better way to teach math than a more traditional sequence of math courses, i.e., algebra 1, geometry, algebra II, etc.? Do you have any suggested changes for the secondary math curriculum?

Yes, some students are pushed through the Math I, II and III program where they are struggling to understand the material. Instead of taking a classes at their level of learning, they are pushed ahead and feel very confused in understanding the concepts. It becomes a struggle for them the entire year and then they are pushed to the next class. Math has traditionally been a hard subject for many people and pushing them too quick, is not the answer. Certainly competency based education would help in this problem.

Is the new computer-adaptive assessment system an improvement over the criterion-referenced tests? Please explain why it is or is not an improvement. Will the new system change the way you deliver instruction?

Yes it is an improvement to track student learning. As a teacher myself, I like using data to look at the strengths and gaps in my students and know immediately where I will remediate. I also like that a teacher can see the student growth at different points in the year. But I have a big concern with the length of time the test takes. For the best situation possible, a teacher would use the test in the fall, winter and spring. Each test would serve a very important purpose for the educator, student and parent to track the students progress and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the students

understanding of the curriculum. Instead, the winter testing session will be cut for most all district (a recent topic of discussion amongst testing directors in Utah) due to the extensive length of time it takes to administer. In prior years, teacher were required to give up 2 days of their curriculum but now they are going to give up anywhere from 8-16 days just to administer the SAGE test in the fall and spring and depending upon the subject that is taught. If teachers added the winter testing session, students would lose anywhere from 12-32 days of instruction which is too many days to loose in a school year.

The new SAGE testing will change the way teachers teach as the questions ask for a higher level of thinking. Never have teachers had access to this type of testing questions where students could manipulate the software. This is new to students and teachers. Students can drag and drop, draw lines, manipulate experiments, highlight statements, move images and more.

GARY MINER, HISTORY TEACHER
MAPLE MOUNTAIN HIGH, NEBO SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

There are a lot of assumptions in education, and those assumptions apply to this question. If a student is self-motivated, has the necessary skills, and support network, a teacher can best serve that student by simply helping the student along the academic road. If a student sees little purpose in education, has no specific educational goals, lacks those educational skills, etc. then the most important thing for a teacher/principal to do is create and build a trust relationship, helping the student understand the value and/or need for education. (It can be said of many students, they don't care about _____ (math, English, science, etc.) until they know you care about them.

I feel like the current system ignores the individuality of students and works far too much like a factory assuming if we put all students through the same "manufacturing process," the finished product will come out the same. That assumes all students value the same outcome—or sees schooling for the same purposes.

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

To this question I have a few ideas:

1. Quit assuming that test scores are the best way to measure effectiveness. The high school process assumes students can read/write at grade level and therefore it is the job of the teacher to simply introduce more curriculum. What happens if the students comes in to a senior government class lacking those skills? Standardized tests do not measure a student's progress, just the outcome. They also ignore other factors that can significantly impact student achievement.

2. What other tools are in place to measure teachers besides a standardized test? Many colleges have implemented a rating system which allows students to help in the evaluation process. With as much money as the state spends on standardized tests, surely some sort of student, parent, administrative evaluation process can be implemented.

3. The one size fits all, common core, etc. will not work. Allow more local controls—find solutions relevant to local situations. Teaching in Utah County with a fairly high socioeconomic demographic is far different than teaching at Navajo Mountain High School. Why make both schools teach to the same standard?

4. I am not a fan of local teachers' unions. Give principals more autonomy to make decisions within his/her building like that of a real boss. Currently the system rewards (financially) teachers in only two ways, greater seniority and advanced educational credits. Such makes the assumption the best teacher (highest financially compensated) is the oldest and has the highest educational degree. My 22 year career says differently. The tenure system does not necessarily help students.

5. Teachers often ask, "Why work hard when there is little incentive to do so?" I love my job and the interaction with students. I think most enter the profession with a desire to help students but unfortunately I have seen far too many become stagnant, unwilling to keep trying. Again, principals need the ability to make changes without fear or consequence of drawn out union appeals.

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

The achievement gap will always exist as long as there are social, cultural, and individual circumstances that impact education. In 22 years I have had many ethnically diverse students, some who struggle significantly with English. Should a recent immigrant, with very limited English skills, be held to the same standard as the student next to him/her who is a native English speaker? Oh, by the way, the native English speaker has no problem with the language but just received news that her mother was diagnosed with cancer, has a few weeks to live (a true story), and sees no point in finishing her high school career.

I could give story after story of unique circumstances. What I want is the ability and flexibility to hold each student accountable to his/her circumstances. Depending on the building principal, that doesn't happen. To the Japanese exchange student who brings a dictionary to class and then spends most of the time taking a test not answering the questions but translating into Japanese—of course she gets more time. To the recent Mexican immigrant who speaks no English I say, "You may not be able to understand all that is going on in class, but you can come to class and make the most of the situation." When that student didn't come to class, and subsequently failed, I was told to reconsider because such was unduly bias.

Here is an interesting question, how and to what extent should an evaluation of effort be measured?

Are schools required to administer too many tests? If so, which tests should be eliminated?

I don't know that it is too many tests, but when tests are simply use to gather data, the incentive to do well is eliminated. Sometimes the state takes so long in returning the data, teachers cannot hold students accountable. When students aren't accountable, sometimes there is no investment in results. Sometimes teachers say, "If you can pass this end of level test, you have proven competency and therefore deserve an A—thus minimizing homework, quizzes, and/or attendance implications.

If each of your students had a laptop or tablet computer, how would teaching and learning be different in your classroom or school?

I would not want a laptop in my classroom. Though technology has its place, my particular courses (U.S. History and Government), are informational. I like to use technology to fill a particular need not think that because students have access to unlimited information it will somehow enhance the overall experience.

What instructional software is used in your classroom or school? How is it used? How effective is the instructional software in improving student achievement?

I do not use any specific software as part of the day to day instruction. We use computer labs for specific information and assignments.

In competency-based education a student advances to the next learning level based on the student's mastery of certain skills and knowledge. What instructional or organizational changes would be required to implement competency-based education at your school for all students? What are the challenges in implementing competency-based education?

Implementing competency-based education would radically change the current system. Currently credits are earned based on time and grading periods such as terms or semesters. The whole four year graduation system is based off this model. Allowing students to move at their own pace would attack (not necessarily a bad thing) the very core of our system. Many of the online and packer courses fit this model.

For secondary school principals and math teachers, are the Secondary Math I, II, and III courses a better way to teach math than a more traditional sequence of math courses, i.e., algebra 1, geometry, algebra II, etc.? Do you have any suggested changes for the secondary math curriculum?

From a teacher standpoint, N/A. From a parent perspective, what was the point? Why is it that every few years a new curriculum is forced into the system as if it is going to solve all the problems and then a few years later something else comes along to do the same thing? Let's see, a few years ago it was "discovery" math. Here is my observation, I teach (history and government) the best our school has to offer. Occasionally a math concept will relate and we will do a quick calculation. Here is my observation, I have students taking calculus who don't know their times tables. I can handle the times tables and not the calculus. Which is the better student? Once again, a one size fits all does not help.

RACHEL NANCE, PRINCIPAL
NORTHWEST MIDDLE, SALT LAKE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

NOTE: I apologize and regret that I am unable to visit with the Committee members. I would appreciate any invitations to future discussions!

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

I can easily create a list of performance characteristics that lead to high student achievement. For example, teachers who maximize instructional time, know the core, teach the entire core, frequently asses student learning to monitor progress and mastery, utilize technology to enhance curriculum, reflect on one's own instructional practice, implement instructional strategies to increase effectiveness, engage students at a deep cognitive level, knowing students' individual strengths to tap into and their needs to support. An important characteristic is teachers who build relationships with students, particularly those who are struggling, so students trust them and are willing to learn from them. Educators who collaborate with colleagues to learn from each other's strengths and also to feel connected to something bigger than just their classroom or their school. Schools which include parents as partners in the education of their children and make decisions based on what data shows are the needs of their population.

What is just as important as these performance characteristics is that there is leadership within a school building that focuses on the big picture—meaning how these separate characteristics align and overlap. In too many schools, professional development provided to teachers is of the latest fad. The School Improvement Plan is written in isolation by a small group of educators and rarely becomes a living document but rather collects dust on the shelf. Collaboration time for teachers is a conversation of to do lists or a time to vent. Administrators don't know how or are unwilling to go through the remediation process with ineffective teachers. Data may be analyzed but often is more like an autopsy rather than a diagnosis. If administrators do classroom observations, which many administrators don't, the feedback is often random and unrelated to the priorities of the school.

For educators to directly impact the achievement of students, all things must be connected and moving toward the same goal of increasing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It is balanced attention to the whole and the parts of the whole that will most efficiently make an impact.

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

The teaching pool is made up of mostly White, middle class, English speakers who student teach in schools with a student body that looks and sounds much like them. This limits a future teacher's ability to understand themselves and their work when teaching a culturally, racially and linguistically rich group of students. The students are often negatively impacted by such a mismatch.

A critical area that the Legislature can influence is teacher preparation programs. People are getting teaching certificates without an ESL Endorsement (English as a Second Language) making them unprepared to teach content to students acquiring the English language. Many of the programs still allow student teaching to be done in schools that are not largely impacted by poverty, race or language.

Likewise, programs for administrative licenses allow the same thing to happen. People often do their administrative interns in their own school or in schools near them that are not faced with the complex challenges and opportunities of a complex school community. The Legislature could put pressure on colleges and universities to ensure educators experience new and diverse school settings to be better prepared.

Another area the Legislature can impact is to increase the salary of teachers. I believe that if teachers were paid more, more people would go into teaching which would deepen the pool from which we hire. Particularly with the content constraints of secondary schools, we have a challenging time finding highly effective and highly qualified teachers to hire. If more people went into teaching, the hiring process would be more competitive which would likely increase the quality of the pool.

In addition to deepening the pool of teacher candidates, another important impact in the realm of the Legislature is to differentiate teacher salaries based on the school in which they work. We need to professionally acknowledge that schools highly impacted by poverty, race and language differences have challenges that are more complicated than other schools. When teachers and schools, individually and collectively, are more effective on standardized measures such as test scores, attendance and graduation, they should be paid accordingly. Achievement bonuses that came from our School Improvement Grant three years ago and that we have continued through private funding from Educational Reform Foundation changed the game at Northwest. Teachers were acknowledged for the challenging work they had done well in their classrooms. If the Legislature created a structure for achievement bonuses in struggling schools, it would most likely lead to the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers we are striving for.

In regarding to funding, the Legislature can bring back the funds to provide professional development throughout the year for teachers. And also increase the funds for better teacher mentor programs. Both of these types of collaboration and support have the potential to increase teacher retention and effectiveness.

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

My responses to the first two questions also answer this third question. We need to diversify the teaching population, if not by their own demographics, than by their experiences as pre-service educators. We need to reward the proven effectiveness of teachers who reduce the gap. We need to acknowledge that not all schools and communities are equal; we know which characteristics historically marginalize students and families. Schools which disrupt that pattern should be studied, not to replicate what they've done but learn from it.

SHAWNEE ROBINSON, TEACHER
HERITAGE ELEMENTARY, OGDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

Performance characteristics of effective principals that result in high student achievement include:

- *having a clear vision to raise student achievement*
- *clear and assertive methods for reaching the goals*
- *strong communication skills*
- *knowledge and skills to contribute to student success through providing support on curriculum and collaborating with teachers to improve instructional practices*
- *knowledge and skills to lead teachers in solving the unique challenges that arise in their specific school population*
- *creating a positive school culture where students feel safe and are motivated to learn*
- *creating a positive school culture where teachers are provided with a collaborative, non-competitive environment where they feel supported and successful in improving student achievement*
- *provide resources and support necessary to allow teachers to fully support student learning in all areas of the core curriculum*

Performance characteristics of effective teachers that result in high student achievement include:
- *having high expectations for student learning and performance and the knowledge and skills to help students meet those expectations*
- *knowing the curriculum they are teaching in-depth; including what students will learn before and after the current grade level and where these skills will help the students in the future*
- *taking a view of educating the whole child; going beyond the curriculum, they help students with organization, on how to take personal accountability, and the skills to be successful at meeting personal and academic goals*
- *the ability to build on a student's talents and interests, as well as, expanding their experiences and knowing how to motivate students to work harder than they ever have*
- *are collaborative and cooperative*
- *take accountability for high student achievement for ALL students in the school and, therefore, take leadership roles to change and maintain a school culture for student success*
- *integrate curriculum to make connections and strengthen learning*
- *have specific objectives for their teaching and make sure that they have identified supports, extensions, and are able to scaffold their instruction for student success*
- *are data-driven; using multiple measures of data, not just testing, to measure and improve student learning*
- *able to find relevant, reliable, and age appropriate tools and resources to support student success*
- *never stop learning and refining the practice of improving student achievement*

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

Principals and teachers need time to learn and incorporate new best practices. Teachers also need to see the big picture and the vision. Often teachers are instructed on the newest method by someone who was trained by someone who was trained… Due to the lack of time, teachers are given the quick view of the methods and left to fill in the blanks while being expected to produce the desired outcomes. Also, due to lack of time, teachers are given bits and pieces of the new strategies and don't know how it all fits together to really impact student learning. Many teachers sit through "seat time" and then go back to school and do what they have been doing because they haven't really been given enough knowledge and haven't been given the time to make sense of it and put it into action. There is not a shortage of successful practices to improve student success, however, if they are not successfully implemented they will fail to help students succeed. To support teachers overcome this obstacle, the legislature can:
- *allow time to do it right – support paid preparation time for teachers to incorporate new strategies, tools, and practices into their instruction; this is in addition to the planning time that teachers have to meet the demands of everyday teaching*

- *provide funding for high quality professional development as teachers and faculties continue learning; including new technologies that open access to multiple ways of improving student achievement*
- *offer teaching incentives (pay increases or tuition reimbursement) for teachers who go above and beyond, on their own time and with their own money, to increase student achievement*
- *implement accountability systems for other members of the education team, in addition to the teacher; accountability for school boards and administration for providing the appropriate tools, professional development, support for increasing student achievement, accountability for parents to have their children at school for the entire school day, and student accountability for improving their knowledge rather than advancing in school because of age*

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

The achievement gap may already occur for some students before they enter school. To help these students, preschool programs that give students opportunities and experiences that they can build on in later schooling need to be provided. During the kindergarten through high school years, the gap will not be closed unless students receive learning opportunities IN ADDITION to the regular school day. The achievement gap is perpetuated if students are removed from grade-level learning to "catch up", because in reality they are getting further behind. This is also the case with students with disabilities who are removed for special education. Students who are achieving behind their peers need extra, strategic support. In addition, they need support during grade level instruction so that they can have mastered these skills when the other skills are obtained.   Solutions must be constructed for these students beyond the mandated days and hours of school. Furthermore, the personnel hired to support students outside the classroom must be rigorously trained, supported, and supervised. Putting a student in a small group or one-on-one learning situation does not help the student achieve higher if they are not receiving quality instruction.

In order to make real turn around in a school, the faculty needs to remain relatively consistent. Many teachers are leaving schools that take more time and effort to go to higher achieving schools because they get the same salary and do not have the same challenges on their time, money, and emotions. Schools where there are extra demands, such as Title 1 schools, need to have smaller class sizes so that teachers are better able to provide for the unique needs of each student and incentives for teachers to remain at the school and continue on the path for higher student achievement.

In competency-based education a student advances to the next learning level based on the student's mastery of certain skills and knowledge. What instructional or organizational changes would be required to implement competency-based education at your school for all students? What are the challenges in implementing competency-based education?

To achieve competency based education, there would need to be a shift in grading (including changes to the state grading management system Aspire), there would need to be collaboration and cooperative teaching between grade levels to meet the needs of all students, the SAGE assessment would need to flexible enough to assess integrated skills while giving a proficiency level of student performance on a specific skill, the core curriculum standards and objectives would need to be prioritized as to which skills are must haves and which skills not as critical for promotion to the next level, teachers and administrators would need to have the same standards and testing state-wide to ensure that students educated in Utah do not fall into gaps in the curriculum. Schools would also need to be conscious in their commitment to the dedication of time and resources to other areas of the curriculum. This system would make it easy to have a laser focus on tested skills and ignore educating the whole child.

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Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.
John Dewey

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AMBER TUCKNESS, MUSIC TEACHER
COTTONWOOD HIGH, GRANITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

As an educator for over 17 years I feel one of the strongest characteristics of a teacher that results in higher student achievement is their expertise in the field. How well does the teacher understand the material that they are teaching? As a music teacher I am constantly trying to grow as a teacher and a musician by taking classes, workshops and playing professionally. I can apply all that I have learned and directly take that to the classroom. I feel if the teacher enjoys the subject material then the students will also learn to embrace the content area. As I become excited and interested in the material I am teaching the students are more engaged and receptive to learning. Other characteristics that aid in student success are strong classroom discipline, accountability, yearly consistency in teaching, fairness, positive personality with encouragement and helpful constructive criticisms. I personally feel that if I can connect with the students in a positive way and guide them to self-analysis and criticism then they are able to help themselves easier and increase their comprehension. Other items that teachers and principals can implement in the classrooms are the use of technology. We are so fortunate to have so much knowledge at our fingertips and students really relate to this new medium. If you can show, demonstrate, or teach it from any technology-based device the students seem far more interested than just reading it from a book. As for the administration as a whole if they are supportive of the teachers and staff it will directly reflect positively onto the students. I have been very fortunate to have extremely supportive administrators at Cottonwood and that has directly affected my students in a positive way. When I know that I have the support and motivation from the administration I become a more driven and successful teacher.

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

Of course the number one need is funding. We are still lowest in the nation for educational funding per student. With higher funds we can help our students in so many ways. Additional technology in the classrooms, smaller class sizes, more programs for students that have special needs, more assistance for students that are currently ELL or ESL. As for the teachers we need higher salaries and better options for lane changes. I know too many excellent teachers that quit due to financial reasons. They are unable to support their families without getting a second or third job. Beyond my teaching job, I am a professional musician, I teach private lessons and I am the director of a youth orchestra. I do all of these things to help supplement my income. There are to many teachers that should be in the classrooms educating our students but sadly they chose to retire or quit early in their lives. As teachers we need more funding for professional development, technology, and added opportunities for obtaining higher degrees with tuition breaks. Personally I would love the opportunity to go back to school to receive a master's degree or even a doctorate but financially I cannot afford to pay tuition and to take a leave of absence from my teaching obligations. I feel a higher degree would greatly enhance my teaching and motivate me to teach longer. I hope to get this opportunity soon so I can get the most out of my education. As for the schools and administrators they need funds to keep schools safe, up to date and positive learning environment for students and staff.

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

I feel smaller class sizes would greatly assist this gap. More one on one time with the teacher will greatly help the student to obtain the information and the teacher will be able to understand the needs of the student better. Students need more access to technology at school and at home. Classes for parents of minority students that would help educated them on how to assist their child in becoming a better student. An effective approach that we as teachers can apply is being the student's ally. We cannot change their home life but we can provide a safe and inviting environment at school. Show these students that we care and we are here to help them succeed no matter their color, race, or background. Some amazing groups that I feel are very productive in narrowing this gap would be AVID and Latinos in action. These groups help the medium level student to achieve skills to become a better student. They also create a positive environment that

encourages students to look towards higher education. We need more programs that will directly affect the lower level minority students. These students need to feel wanted and cared for in the school system. One thing that I use in my classroom that helps these students is tiered learning. I try to help each student achieve their own goals and to not compare them with the other students. Each student needs to be treated as an individual and the class material catered to their needs. This takes more time and effort but the end result shows that each student can progress and grasp new concepts. I feel teachers need more professional development on how to use tiered teaching in their classes.

Are schools required to administer too many tests? If so, which tests should be eliminated?

Yes. I feel testing is very necessary but it is currently taking away too much time from the classroom. Now this may not directly affect my class but I know how many of the other teachers and students feel. However there are many times students have to leave my class to do testing. They figure since I am not a core class that I will not miss them in class. Sadly this is not the case, my classes are attendance based learning environments and it is very hard to make classroom time in my area. I do feel that we need to collect data to see how we are doing as teachers and students. I just feel that there is too much data that is currently being collected and taking away from the class day. This is the first year of the SAGE test so I am not sure of the results but I am very aware that it took away a lot of class time for these core teachers' then previous tests. Then we have CRT test and the quarterly assessment tests in 3 core areas. I am very thankful for the ACT test for all juniors. I feel that is a very good use for a half of a school day and will help increase our scores and higher education attendance. The students feel over tested and really just want more time in class learning the subjects they signed up for in school. Not being a core teacher I am not sure which test should be eliminated but I do think we need to reflect from year to year and see if there are some that are more valid than others.

If each of your students had a laptop or tablet computer, how would teaching and learning be different in your classroom or school?

As stated before I feel technology is an amazing learning tool in the classroom. Anytime I can use technology in my classroom my students are more engaged and receptive to the new concept. Even as a music teacher I feel that laptops or tablets would be extremely effective in my classroom. They would have access to so much information and many learning tools. This would assist with tiered learners, eliminate time for having to take notes, help students relate with lecture, and meet the needs of the individual students. It would give the students access anytime anyplace. I use technology daily with the students for tuning, sight-reading, metronome's, sound wave demonstrations, video and audio examples, theory, etc. I can only imagine how productive a student could be in other classes with their own laptop or tablet. I know our district is pushing us to purchasing eBooks and using software that will help us assess our students better. It would keep teachers up to date and encourage them to learn what our students are already excelling at in the technology world. My son at the age of 2 can already do more on a tablet than my father. This is the way of the future and the students love to use technology. My only concern would be could our current infrastructure handle all of that technology.

What instructional software is used in your classroom or school? How is it used? How effective is the instructional software in improving student achievement?

We have many computer labs throughout the school. I believe our math teachers are currently using online math software to teach from in our district. All testing is done through computers. As for details I am not sure all that our school uses but I have many software items that I use daily. My entire guitar course is done through online teaching software. I just switched to this format this year and it engages the students more and has given me a fresh approach to the class. In my performing class we use many apps that helps with tuning, rhythm, aural skill training, recording, etc.. New software that our district will be using in the music area next year is Smartmusic. This is a wonderful way for teachers to assess individual grow of our musicians. They can practice with, record and get scored on their musical performance. I feel all of these changes are so effective in improving student achievement. Anything you can do to maintain a students focus and attention for a class period is worthy in my mind. For me technology assists in keeping this focus and has been a great addition to my classroom environment.

In competency-based education a student advances to the next learning level based on the student's mastery of certain skills and knowledge. What instructional or organizational changes would be required to implement competency-based education at your school for all students? What are the challenges in implementing competency-based education?

We would have to determine where each student is currently at and then test him or her to see where he or she ended up at the end of the year. This takes times and a lot of organization. Each student is at a different level and learns at a different rate. Throughout the year the teacher would need to assess where the student is at and assist them in reaching their personal goal. The challenge is finding the funds and time to assess each student individually. Each department would need to work together to come up with a common assessment of students at each level. It would be imperative that all were tested on the same material at the same levels. On paper it sounds like a wonderful idea and I would love to see the progress of each of my students in a school year. However in reality there is just not enough time in the day to assess each student numerous times in a year without taking too much time out of class, without assistance and without affecting the rest of the class.

TINA WEST, PRINCIPAL
ROSECREST ELEMENTARY, GRANITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

The most important performance characteristic of quality educators is that they have passion for their profession. Teachers work hard, often longer than contract hours preparing and planning for student growth. This is because they care. Teachers are unique in their profession, especially as compared to others in careers who put in their time to collect a check, but don't get so absorbed in their jobs. Educators are never done for the day. There is the correction of paperwork, the gathering of supplies, and the constant reflective thinking that continues to better the practice. The vast majority of educators give more than is asked of them because they know this is what is needed to show growth and to raise the future generation. Most teachers are what they do as teaching is a part of them.

Teachers spend their own money to provide for students and classroom needs. While there are some resources available, they are not enough to equate to the needs. So teachers make up the difference out of necessity for student success.

Teachers attend professional developments and trainings outside of contract time which are paid for out of their personal money. They do this to become more efficient and effective in their positions. This is not true in most other professions.

Teachers are attentive to varied abilities and needs across a large range of individuals. Included in this are instructional interventions for struggling students to determine what will work to help the students show growth. This can be a full program for at least six weeks for just one student, and this is in addition to all of the other programs and lessons the teacher is required to plan and teach. Teachers provide incentives to encourage student motivation. Teachers collect and analyze data to know if students are showing growth. Teachers communicate regularly with school committees and parents. These tasks and more are a part of an educator's role, and these are for each of the 27-35 students in a classroom. Many professions do not have as many dimensions, but each student is unique requiring caring teachers to reach them on their individual levels.

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

Allocating funding for resources and supplies is helpful. Legislative funds provide assistance with what is needed for adequate classroom operations. Trust Lands funds help schools in many ways such as providing paraprofessionals, professional developments and trainings, technology, supplies, equipment, and etcetera. All of these are linked to

student growth. These funds are needed and appreciated. Since so much is needed in providing an environment conducive to learning, teachers spend their own money in supplement, so additional funds are always welcomed and appreciated.

As previously mentioned, teachers work hard and care about students showing growth. A suggestion for Legislators is to spend significant time in schools before passing legislation. One must be familiar with aspects of everyday school operations in order to say how they should be conducted. Some laws are more detrimental than beneficial. Some do more harm than good. One such mandate is SB64 on educator evaluation. While I have no doubt in my current educational practice that I will receive a three or a four on the four point scale, it is restrictive to have all that I do in my profession reflected in one number. If I am giving to my profession and to the students all that I can, then I should not receive a score based on how students perform. I already care about and work hard for the students to perform their best as this is the career I chose; this is what I do. And if I am not performing at adequate levels, there is already a due process in place to give an opportunity to fix the problems or to find another occupation. And this process is not demeaning in nature; it is problem solving to determine if I have what it takes to be an educator. Educators work hard and give so much of themselves - is it really justified to grade them based on how a group of students with many individual variables perform?

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

The biggest challenge for teachers of all students is to find ways to get them connected to school. Teachers need to find what interests students and use those interests to have students become a part of the school scene. Interests include things such as clubs, activities, sports, and etcetera. Individual cultural understandings are becoming more prevalent here in Utah. The message is being acquired by educators that our state is changing and more minorities are a part of our school systems. While this change brings about uncertainties and demands, educators are working with students' individual strengths and weaknesses.

The new computer adaptive assessment, the SAGE, is very verbal. Minority students would have a better opportunity to demonstrate skills if there was an assessment that was less verbal, thus requiring less reading in English. Also if additional funding were available to enable schools to provide before or after school tutoring sessions, minority students may take advantage to get some of the help they need and thus grow academically.

Secondary students have requirements for graduation, and for some students these requirements can be stringent. If students had the option to choose one of two paths and therefore one of two graduation certificates, it may help them feel successful and stay connected to school. One certificate could be an academic program with all of the stringent requirements making a student eligible for college entry. The other certificate could be a vocation program requiring the student to complete functional and applicable courses along with work release credit. An option of two graduation certificates meets the needs of more students than currently available.

JASON YOUNG, PRINCIPAL
DUCHESNE ELEMENTARY, DUCHESNE SCHOOL DISTRICT

What are the performance characteristics of teachers and principals that result in high student achievement?

- *They are full participants in a strong PLC (Professional Learning Community).*
- *Frequent, specific formative assessments for learning.*
- *A focus on student learning of the identified essential standards.*
- *Frequent, specific feedback on progress toward mastering essential standards.*
- *Active Student Engagement.*

- *An environment where students know they are genuinely cared for.*

What can the Legislature do to support teachers and principals in attaining high student achievement?

I firmly believe that the more we can strengthen the PLC (Professional Learning Communities) process, the more we will attain high student achievement. All stakeholders, especially the Legislature, need to recognize that the team approach to educating each student is much more powerful than each teacher on an island trying to attain high achievement for each student. Through the process of selecting the most essential standards, creating valid common formative assessments, collaborating together to disaggregate the data, and then deciding together how best to meet the needs of each and every student, high student achievement will result.

I feel that we need to stay with the Utah Core as it is currently written for an extended period of time so that we can zero in on a target that is not always shifting. With the feedback from the SAGE summative, formative and interim assessments, PLC teams will be able to respond to the weaknesses of their students and lead them to higher and higher achievement levels.

It would be greatly appreciated and very helpful if the Legislature were more proactive in communicating to the public the great things that are happening in education in Utah. As we send out a unified and positive voice regarding the great learning that is taking place in our state, our parents and communities will have much greater confidence in our public schools. This positive communication applies to our teachers as well as the Utah Core.

I recognize the many divergent causes that compete with education for funding. However, I respectfully ask for much more funding for teacher salary and benefits. Recently at Duchesne Elementary we lost one the best and brightest teachers in the state because he needed to seek employment outside of education in order to provide for his family. Of course we hired a new teacher to take his place, but the goal of high student achievement took a big hit by losing such a powerful teacher. If we are to recruit and retain the highest quality individuals to our profession, we simply must compensate them better than we are currently.

How can Utah reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students? What are effective approaches in creating an environment where all students are expected to achieve and are successful in advancing?

Again, I see the PLC as the most effective approach to helping each individual student achieve at high levels. The PLC provides a setting where many minds are able to look closely at an individual student, determine their specific needs, and work as a team to meet those needs.

Are schools required to administer too many tests? If so, which tests should be eliminated?

Yes. I would propose that the Direct Writing Assessment be eliminated and rolled into the SAGE writing (which is already the plan). I would also hope that the Kindergarten pre & post test could be rolled into the SAGE assessment system so that there is less redundancy.

In competency-based education a student advances to the next learning level based on the student's mastery of certain skills and knowledge. What instructional or organizational changes would be required to implement competency-based education at your school for all students? What are the challenges in implementing competency-based education?

I think that our school has been inching more and more toward such an idea as competency-based education over the past few years. However, our current reality is far removed from this. Many changes would need to take place before we could successfully make the switch. My first approach would be to engage teachers in high quality professional development as to why and how to implement competency-based education. I would also ensure that parents would be included in learning about this change. Organizationally I would most likely take one of two approaches. 1- Train a team

of teachers and/or teachers assistants to rotate from classroom to classroom to teach the students who are on their designated level. Or 2- Assign each teacher to a certain level and then move all students on their level to that teacher until they have demonstrated competency – at which time they would move to the new teacher assigned to their new level. In either case, I can't visualize how to pull it off without additional teachers in the school.

I think it would be critical that very simple and specific proficiency scales (like rubrics) be created for each standard at each level. The assessments for each level must be built based on these proficiency scales. This would ensure that students are accurately placed on the correct level and that the instruction would match the needs of each student.

Additionally, there would need to be many decisions made regarding grade placement, report card grading, credits toward graduation, NCAA clearinghouse guidelines, the social aspect of school for the highly advanced and for the learning disabled, etc.

Are Utah core standards for English language arts and mathematics sufficiently rigorous? Do you have any suggested modifications to those standards?

I think they are very well written as they are. The K-12 approach to systematically prepare students for college and career readiness is very well done. The ability to share and collaborate with educators in many other states makes our core very valuable.

Is the new computer-adaptive assessment system an improvement over the criterion-referenced tests? Please explain why it is or is not an improvement. Will the new system change the way you deliver instruction?

To be honest, I think the jury is still out because we have not yet seen the feedback reports. However, if it comes to us the way it has been explained, I think it will be a great improvement. I hope the data is specific enough that our teachers can use it to guide instruction.

It is only marginally new to us in our district because we have been using adaptive assessments through NWEA for several years.