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# Research Report

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## Lessons from Our Neighbor

Learning from Colorado's Educational Success



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**The mission of Utah Foundation** is to promote a thriving economy, a well-prepared workforce, and a high quality of life for Utahns by performing thorough, well-supported research that helps policymakers, business and community leaders, and citizens better understand complex issues and providing practical, well-reasoned recommendations for policy change.

# Lessons from Our Neighbor

## Learning from Colorado’s Educational Success

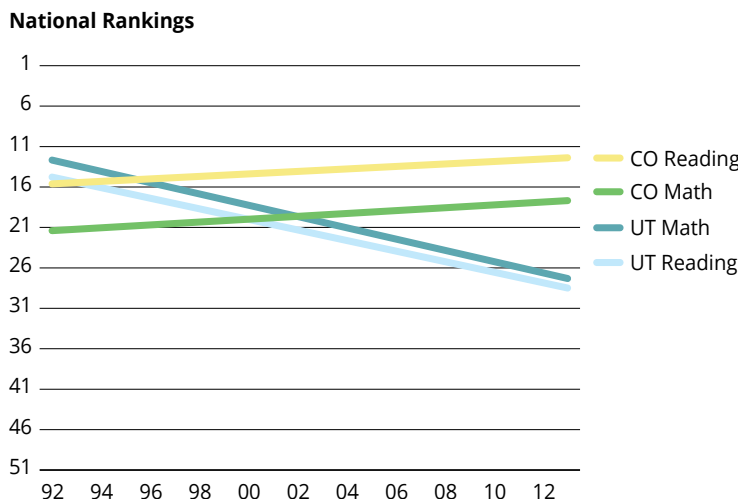
In the early 1990s Utah ranked in the top 15 states on all four major national tests. Utah lost ground in the late nineties and now ranks in the middle twenties among the states. Colorado also slipped in national rankings, but contrary to Utah, Colorado quickly rebounded, and has been in the top 15 in reading and math for the last decade despite spending less than the national average on education.

This report explores a range of policies and programs in Colorado that might account for their robust improvement. Utah could learn from Colorado’s statewide assessments and accountability measures, publicly-funded preschool, full-day kindergarten, and specific literacy legislation.

### FINDINGS

- Utah used to be ranked higher on national tests than Colorado, but now the opposite is true.
- Utah has no state-funded preschool. In Colorado, 21% of four-year olds attend state-funded preschools, all of which adhere to rigorous standards of quality.
- A pilot program is providing preschool for 1,000 at-risk Utah children through a private-public partnership. By contrast, Denver has local government subsidies for all four-year olds to attend high-quality preschool. In total, tens of thousands of Colorado children attend high-quality public preschool annually.
- In Utah, 13% of five-year olds attend full-day kindergarten. In Colorado, 74% of five-year olds attend full-day kindergarten.
- In Utah, money for literacy is spent on tutors, specialists, and software. Other programs are poorly funded, community-based, and staffed by volunteers. In Colorado, literacy initiatives are more centralized, better funded, and targeted towards at-risk kids. Further, Colorado’s teachers are required by statute to create individualized plans for each child, and to make parents active partners in achieving reading goals.

**National Trends of 4th Grade Reading and Math Rankings, Utah and Colorado, 1992-2013**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

This report was written by Utah Foundation Research Analyst Melissa Proctor and Research Director Shawn Teigen. Ms. Proctor and Mr. Teigen can be reached for comment at (801) 355-1400 or by email at [melissa@utahfoundation.org](mailto:melissa@utahfoundation.org) or [shawn@utahfoundation.org](mailto:shawn@utahfoundation.org).

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