



UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATOR LICENSING

PUBLIC EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
STAFF: BEN LEISHMAN & JILL CURRY

ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

The Utah State Office of Education (USOE) requests an increase to the Educator Licensing section in the amount of \$265,000 one-time in FY 2016 and \$265,000 ongoing in FY 2017 from the Professional Practices Restricted Subfund. The funding will meet identified needs listed below. The Professional Practices Subfund, which is funded from teacher licensing fees, has been carrying a balance of over \$1,000,000 since 2008.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Educator Licensing handles all procedures and mechanisms utilized in the issuance of new Utah educator licenses, adding new credentials to existing licenses, and the renewal of Utah educator licenses. Additionally, the section implements background checks as required by Utah law.

Educator Licensing monitors the compliance of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with the licensing and assignment of teachers, and provides data to the School Finance section of the USOE for the appropriate distribution of various legislative funding sources (professional staff costs, legislative salary adjustment, supplies and materials funding).

In conjunction with Educator Licensing, the Utah Professional Practices Advisory Commission (UPPAC) is a committee of nine educators and two community members charged with maintaining and promoting a high standard of professional conduct and ethics among Utah teachers. It is advisory to the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) in making recommendations regarding educator licensing and may take appropriate disciplinary action regarding educator misconduct.

Educator Licensing and UPPAC are funded through the Professional Practices Subfund. The table below details the fund balances, revenues, expenses, and transfers from 2005-2015. The table demonstrates that the restricted fund has carried a large end balance since 2008. Educator Licensing and UPPAC cannot spend the balance because they cannot exceed the amount appropriated by the Legislature.

Year	Beginning Balance	Revenues	Expenditures	Transfers	End Balance
2005	\$3,351	\$74,545	\$0	(\$74,545)	\$3,351
2006	\$3,351	\$226,345	\$0	(\$85,821)	\$143,875
2007	\$143,875	\$224,412	\$0	(\$86,124)	\$282,163
2008	\$282,163	\$2,166,689	\$0	(\$1,127,538)	\$1,321,314
2009	\$1,321,314	\$1,555,334	\$0	(\$1,115,956)	\$1,760,692
2010	\$1,760,692	\$1,962,064	\$132,890	(\$1,460,600)	\$2,129,266
2011	\$2,129,266	\$2,058,735	\$0	(\$1,626,873)	\$2,561,128
2012	\$2,561,128	\$2,122,605	\$0	(\$1,672,691)	\$3,011,042
2013	\$3,011,042	\$2,161,960	\$0	(\$1,904,445)	\$3,268,557
2014	\$3,268,557	\$1,431,979	\$0	(\$1,829,211)	\$2,871,325
2015	\$2,871,325	\$1,463,763	\$0	(\$2,036,867)	\$2,298,221

Use of Requested Funding

The USOE requests the additional funding to cover the increased cost of background checks and to hire an educator preparation program approval specialist. This position is currently vacant in the Educator Licensing section.

The supplemental increase will meet a projected funding shortfall due to an increase in fees paid to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation to process educator background checks. In addition, there is an increase in the number of UPPAC hearings in the current year. In FY 2016, the cost of enrolling fingerprints in the FBI rap-back system, as required by statute, has increased significantly.

During the 2015 legislative session, the Legislature passed H.B. 124, “Education Background Check Amendments,” which requires the Board to enroll all educator fingerprints in the FBI rap-back system. The cost of “lifetime” enrollment with the FBI was set at \$13 per background check. USOE estimates that this will result in \$200,000 in additional expenditures for FY 2106. Costs may increase each fiscal year until all educators are enrolled in the FBI system.

The Educator Preparation Program Approval Specialist position is currently vacant. The position is intended to focus on university program accreditation and the Out-of-State licensing process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislature may wish to consider increasing the allocation to Educator Licensing for FY 2016 and FY 2017. This request would not require additional funding from the Education Fund, but an increase in the appropriation from the restricted account to Educator Licensing.