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## Issue Brief – Staffing Statewide Programs and Functions

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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### **SUMMARY**

The Utah State Office of Education (USOE) functions as support staff to the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Further, USOE staff also support many functions in the school districts and provide statewide program support and administration. The State Board of Education has requested additional full time staff to assist in these statewide support functions.

### **OBJECTIVE**

This brief details staffing concerns at the State Office of Education expressed by the State Board of Education. These concerns include hiring additional staff to provide support to key programs and address employee turnover through providing salary adjustments for the specialists at the USOE.

### **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

Education Specialists at the State Office of Education provide state-wide support to the school districts and charter schools. The State Board of Education has identified three areas where additional staff support is required. Further, the Board has identified the turnover of professional staff at the USOE as a concern. The following sections provide further detail on these matters.

#### ***Assistant USBE Internal Auditor***

The State Board of Education employs one full-time auditor to conduct reviews of the many programs, issues, and problems within the State's public education system. The Board indicates that three of the last audits conducted by the Board's auditor resulted in litigation. Audits leading to litigation consume a significant portion of the auditor's time.

The Board requests an appropriation of \$70,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to hire a full-

time assistant for the Board's auditor. An additional auditor will allow the Board to conduct more audits and better evaluate program performance and compliance by the districts. The Board is responsible for an education budget that may reach \$3 billion in FY 2007. Two full time auditors may help the Board better oversee the implementation of this revenue and the compliance to regulations placed on these funds.

*Recommendation:* The Analyst recommends that the subcommittee discuss the need for an additional auditor for the State Board of Education. The subcommittee may wish to include \$70,000 in Uniform School Funds in its prioritized list of funding requests.

#### ***Pre-Kindergarten Specialist***

With recent emphasis on the impact pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten have on student performance, the State Board of Education requests funding to hire a full-time Pre-Kindergarten specialist at the State Office of Education. According to the State Board, "research indicates that high-quality pre-kindergarten programs are essential for providing students in poverty with the necessary skills for successful transition to kindergarten."<sup>1</sup>

A pre-kindergarten specialist would assist school districts with pre-kindergarten programs and help school districts impacted by poverty develop a pre-kindergarten program. The Board requests an ongoing Uniform School Fund appropriation of \$131,200 to hire this specialist.

*Recommendation:* The subcommittee may wish to evaluate and prioritize the request for \$131,200 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to hire a Pre-Kindergarten specialist at the State Office of Education.

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<sup>1</sup> Utah State Board of Education. FY 2007 Budget Request. September 2, 2005.

***Special Needs Scholarship Administration – \$112,000  
General Fund***

During the 2005 General Session, the Legislature passed H.B. 249 “Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarships.” This bill created a scholarship program for special needs students to attend a private school. The Legislature appropriated \$100,000 in one-time General Fund revenue to support the administration of the program.

The Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program was funded with one-time funds, but the program is ongoing. The State Board of Education hired a full-time specialist to oversee the implementation of this program.

*Recommendation:* The Analyst recommends that the subcommittee prioritize \$112,000 in ongoing General Fund revenue to support the ongoing administrative functions associated with the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program.

***Public Education Job Enhancement Program  
Administration***

During the 2005 General Session, the Legislature appropriated \$2,500,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to support the Public Education Job Enhancement Program (PEJEP). Along with this funding, the Legislature included additional provisions in the Legislation that included special education teachers as eligible incentive recipients along with the original math and science teachers.

The Legislature also provided authorization during the 2005 General Session to the State Board of Education to use up to \$60,000 in PEJEP non-lapsing balances to support program administration. Since ongoing funding was provided for the program, administration of the program should also be from an ongoing source. The State Board requests that the Legislature provide \$60,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to support this position.

*Recommendation:* The subcommittee may wish to prioritize the requested \$60,000 in ongoing revenue to support the administration of the Public Education Job Enhancement Program among the other items before the subcommittee.

***Market Adjustments for USOE Education Specialists***

The State Board of Education has identified employee retention and recruitment at the State Office of Education as a concern. Professional staff at the USOE does not receive market comparability adjustments recommended to the Legislature by the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM). According to the State Office of Education, based on past salary surveys, licensed employees approximately 21 percent below market

level and annual turnover of specialists at the USOE is around 25 percent.

School districts represent the primary competitors to USOE in the education specialist market. The Board requests \$306,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to provide salary adjustments to select education specialists. This funding will allow the Superintendent to cover a selective 2 step increase for certain specialists.

*Recommendation:* The subcommittee may wish to evaluate the compensation levels of USOE professional staff compared to the school districts and prioritize an increase of \$306,000 to provide compensation adjustments. The Analyst has included this item in a list of “Market Comparability Adjustment” (MCA) requests submitted by state agencies. These requests will be considered by the Legislature when it establishes an employee compensation package.

**LEGISLATIVE ACTION**

This section provides a guide of what actions might be taken if the Legislature wishes to adopt the recommendations of this brief. The Analyst recommends the Legislature:

1. Consider prioritizing the Board's request to hire an assistant auditor among the other items before the subcommittee. This position will require an appropriation of \$70,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to the State Board of Education.
2. Evaluate the need for a Pre-Kindergarten specialist at the Utah State Office of Education, and prioritize the requested \$131,200 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue among the other items before the subcommittee.
3. Prioritize \$112,000 in ongoing General Fund revenue to support the administration of the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program.
4. Prioritize \$60,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to support the administration of the Public Education Job Enhancement Program.
5. Evaluate the need for MCA increases for USOE professional staff. The subcommittee may wish to prioritize \$306,000 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to support these increases or recommend to the Executive Appropriations Committee that these items be considered along with other MCA increases in state agencies.