



UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION STATEWIDE ONLINE EDUCATION PROGRAM

PUBLIC EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
STAFF: BEN LEISHMAN & JILL CURRY

ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

Student enrollment in the Statewide Online Education Program (SOEP) has increased over time. It is estimated that the appropriation for this fiscal year, which funds the participation of home and private school students, will be fully obligated by March 2016. The current ongoing appropriation for the program is unlikely to meet demand for the program among private and home school students in future years.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Statewide Online Education Program was implemented in S.B. 65, Statewide Online Education Program, during the 2011 General Session. The program is available to students enrolled in a district or charter school and, beginning in FY 2014 it was made available to students who attend a private or a home school. District and charter school students are funded through the Minimum School Program. Home and private school students who participate in the Statewide Online Education Program are funded through appropriations made to the program. The table below details the appropriation history for the SOEP.

Statewide Online Education Program Appropriations, FY 2012 - 2016					
Fiscal Year	Administration Ongoing	Administration One-time	Program Ongoing	Program One-time	Total
2012	250,000 ^a	0	0	0	250,000
2013	250,000	0	0	0	250,000
2014	250,000	0	0	150,000 ^b	400,000
2015	250,000	0	500,000 ^c	150,000	900,000
2016	250,000	0	500,000	250,000 ^d	1,000,000
^a In S.B. 65 (H. Stephenson)					
^b An additional \$150,000 one-time was appropriated in S.B.3 (Hillyard)					
^c An additional \$500,000 ongoing (and \$150,000 one-time) was appropriated in H.B. 3 (M. Brown)					
^d An additional \$250,000 one-time was appropriated in H.B. 2 (Sanpei)					

Beginning in FY 2012, \$250,000 ongoing was appropriated to administer the program. Private and home school students started participating in the program in FY 2014 with a one-time appropriation of \$150,000. In the following fiscal year, \$500,000 ongoing and \$150,000 one-time was appropriated to fund the participation of home and private school students. For FY 2016, \$250,000 one-time was appropriated for the program.

Participation and demand from students for the SOEP has increased over time. So as not to exceed the budget for the program, this year the State Office of Education began regulating enrollment for home and private school students. Once the funds are obligated enrollment of home and private school students in the program will cease. The State Office of Education estimates that the appropriation for this fiscal year will be fully obligated by March 2016.

To keep enrollment open for private and home school students for the remainder of FY 2016, the State Office of Education estimates that the program will need an additional \$500,000 one-time. To meet the estimated demand from private and home school students in the next year (FY 2017), the State Office of Education estimates that the program will need a total of \$1,250,000 ongoing. The demand for the program will continue to grow in the future, so the legislature may also wish to consider the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislature may wish to consider the following:

- Appropriating a supplemental one-time amount of \$500,000 for FY 2016 to keep enrollment open for home and private school students.
- Increasing the ongoing appropriation for the Statewide Online Education Program to \$1,250,000 to meet demand for the program among private and home school students.
- Separate the funding for the program, both administration and student participation costs, to a separate line-item or program within the State Board of Education’s budget. This will allow for greater visibility of the program in the budget process and will not mix program funding with other education activities.
- Instituting a mechanism for regulating enrollment to ensure enrollment does not exceed the appropriation for the program.