



PUBLIC EDUCATION

2002-03 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

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UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

■ **The content of this annual report** is largely specified in the Utah Code (53A-1-301). Consequently, the following pages contain the statistical data necessary to meet the statutory directive. At the same time, these data provide a rich source of information about the conditions of Utah's public schools. I commend the report and its data-rich content to Utahns, along with encouragement to personalize the review of Utah's public schools through consideration of the experiences of a student known personally by the reader. Beyond the facts and figures, statistics and charts contained in the annual report, contemplate the personal experiences of a student. How has that student fared? What

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has been his or her experience(s) in the school? What could the school have done better to meet the needs of the student? What could the student have done better? How could parent, guardian, or family involvement have strengthened or improved the school experience for that child or student?

I encourage readers of this report to become involved in their local schools. Public schools are just that—public. Without the proactive involvement of the community, these schools are unlikely to meet the increasingly critical learning needs of the increasingly diverse student population entering through the schoolhouse doors.

By statutory direction 53A-1-301(3)(d)(viii), this report must provide information about:

- (1) The development and implementation of the strategy of focusing on core academics.
- (2) The development and implementation of competency-based education and progress-based assessments.
- (3) The results being achieved under (1) and (2). However, since the legislation adding these items to the annual report passed in March 2003 and the school year covered by this report ended in June of that same year, while initial work was begun, results are extremely preliminary. Early work has centered around the specification and clarification of curriculum standards and objectives, as well as

assessments in core academic areas; changes to statewide graduation requirements, including the requirement of additional work in academic areas as determined by local boards of education; and putting in place processes to develop definitions of competency and means of quantifying competency, as well as getting feedback from the public about both. Future annual reports will contain specifics with regard to these items.

The education of our children is of such importance and consequence that there will always be a need for work and improvement, especially given the practical constraints endemic to Utah. Student achievement continues to be disparate, especially with regard to minority students, students for whom English is not the primary language, and students from poverty-stricken families. Nevertheless, public education remains the best hope and noblest effort of society, worthy of the sincere, collaborative efforts of educators, legislators, businesses, and families to ensure its success. Utahns can be pleased with the quality of their public schools and the efficiency achieved when investment per student is compared with general accomplishment.

Thank you for your interest in Utah's public schools.

MISSION STATEMENT

In June of 2002 the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) adopted the following mission statement:

The Utah State Office of Education will promote consistency in implementation of education policy and advocacy for students through leadership, service, and accountability.

The following narrative represents some of the significant work accomplished in each area of the USOE's mission in 2002–2003.

LEADERSHIP

■ **In the past year, at the direction of the State Board of Education, USOE staff facilitated the development of a major plan for increasing student achievement.** Utah also continues to be a leader in innovative educational programs such as the Electronic High School.

The State Office of Education provides leadership by advocating sound educational practice, providing reliable information, and facilitating collaboration.

PERFORMANCE PLUS

In October 2002, and throughout the 2003 calendar year, the Utah State Board of Education developed Performance Plus, a plan for increasing student achievement in Utah that is built upon the expectation of competency for every student. Key aspects of the plan include establishing competency standards for reading, writing, math, and science, expecting frequent

and ongoing performance assessment in each of the standards in ways that give teachers diagnostic information to improve instruction, and providing for immediate interventions (such as after-school studies or tutoring during the day) for students who are struggling. The plan relies upon significant additional funding for Utah's schools, tied to increased performance and results.

Performance Plus was discussed statewide in five Governor's Summits and more than 30 public hearings. Insightful feedback was given, and alterations to the plan will be forthcoming, following multi-month intensive and detailed planning by task forces assigned to specific aspects of the plan—elementary reading and math, middle school rigor, high school exit competencies, accommodations and modifications, and diplomas and transcripts. Such discussions are unprecedented in recent Utah history and include parents, educators, business and community representatives, higher education officials, and government and civic leaders.

It is anticipated that the Utah State Board of Education, with financial support from the Utah State Legislature, will take action to implement aspects of Performance Plus as early as 2004, in an effort to ensure that all children in Utah's public schools obtain a rigorous and excellent education.

ELECTRONIC HIGH SCHOOL

The Electronic High School is entering its tenth year of operation and is fully accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges

and Universities. The Electronic High School is now the largest such high school in America, with more than 14,000 students. It serves five major groups of students:

- Students needing to make up credit
- Students who wish to take a class not available at their local schools
- Students who wish to earn additional credits to accelerate graduation
- Students who have dropped out and whose class has already graduated
- Home schooled students

SERVICE

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Utah charter schools serve students with a wide range of abilities from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. As a group, Utah charter schools utilize diverse instructional approaches, and each has a unique academic environment.

State Office of Education staff spend hundreds of hours providing technical and professional assistance to local districts and schools in many diverse areas such as curriculum, technology, law, assessment, equity, finance, and services for students with special needs. In the last few years, that service has expanded to include a growing number of charter schools.

There are currently 19 charter schools operating in Utah. Three more are approved to open in the fall of 2004. Charter school enrollments for the 2002–03 school year doubled the previous year’s enrollments, bringing the current enrollment to 3,232. Five additional New Century High Schools have been scheduled to open over the next three years.

This year saw several changes in charter school legislation, including the creation of a revolving loan fund for the purchase, construction, or renovation of charter school facilities. A loan committee has been formed and will accept applications for loans beginning in the 2003–04 school year. Charter schools are fully included in the Utah Performance Assessment System for Students (U-PASS), and are responsible for meeting the state benchmarks to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

More charters were granted by local school districts this year than in any year since Utah’s Charter School Program began in 1998. Five schools received charters from their local school boards. One school opened midyear, three more will open in fall of 2004, and one will open in fall of 2005. The State Board of Education approved the following charter schools during 2003:

- The Academy for Math, Engineering and Science (AMES), Salt Lake City
- Freedom Academy, Provo
- Discovery Charter School, Provo
- Soldier Hollow School, Midway

Information concerning Utah’s charter schools can be found at www.usoe.k12.ut.us/charterschools.

ACCOUNTABILITY

■ **School and student accountability continues to be in the forefront of legislative and public concern, and is manifested in increased numbers of laws, both federal and state, passed on this issue.** Two major tasks undertaken by the USOE the past year were the construction of a data warehouse and implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The Utah State Office of Education provides accountability through implementing law and policy and collecting and reporting information.

USOE DATA WAREHOUSE AND THE UTAH PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM FOR STUDENTS (U-PASS)

In 2000, legislation concerning U-PASS mandated that comprehensive and detailed school-level data be reported to the public on a web site by October 1, 2003. In separate legislation, funding was also provided for the construction of a more general-purpose data warehouse for education data. In 2002, federal education legislation (No Child Left Behind) was passed requiring the State Office of Education to incorporate Annual Yearly Progress requirements into the already-in-progress U-PASS/data warehouse project.

The data warehouse, along with U-PASS, has numerous objectives. These include clearly communicating to the districts what data are expected and at what times during the year; defining each data element clearly and unambiguously; coordinating the accurate, timely, and complete collection of data from numerous sources; maintaining a secure and useable infrastructure to house and share the data; and providing this data, along with tools, for research and analysis.

As of October 1, the warehouse was fully populated and preliminary U-PASS reports were made available. The data warehouse now contains 45 tables and 40 million rows, with approximately 1/2 billion pieces of data. All districts and charter schools worked hard and followed very detailed directions to get student information reported to the clearinghouse in record time. In previous years, some raw data was still coming in during November. This year, data that came directly from districts was submitted by August.

There were inevitable programming and data errors in the initial release of the warehouse. These were due, in large part, to the very ambitious time lines forced upon the USOE's Computer Services section by the No Child Left Behind Act—time lines that allowed almost no time for testing and piloting. While most, if not all, of the programming errors have been corrected, Computer Services staff members are still working through a few data definition and reporting problems that caused unexpected results in some of the data.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

On June 12, 2002, Utah submitted the first installment of the state's plan for the implementation of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act as reauthorized and titled "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB). This effort was Utah's first attempt ever at a consolidated plan for the majority of programs authorized and funded through this federal source. This early submission outlined the State Office of Education's plans to distribute formula and discretionary funds, implement the major provisions of the law, and support districts and schools in their efforts to implement the requirements of the law. The plan is built around five major goals outlined in the legislation and anticipates the use of NCLB funds to reach these major goals. The five goals include increased percentages of students proficient in reading/language arts and math, increased numbers of English language learners becoming proficient in the English language, increased numbers of highly qualified teachers, safe schools, and increased rates of graduation from high school.

Since that first submission, the USOE staff has been loosely organized into cross-agency workgroups to facilitate the implementation of the state plan. Districts have been assigned liaisons to assist with local implementation issues, and a consolidated plan has been developed for use by the districts in applying for all NCLB and state formula funds.

The second piece of the state's NCLB application was submitted in January 2003, and outlined the state's proposed plan for determining school and district accountability regarding student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, also referred to as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Utah's system of accountability, or AYP, is constructed around the percentage of students reaching a proficient level of performance on State Core Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) in grades 3–8 and 10.

The final piece of the Utah plan will provide baseline data, improvement goals, and program descriptions related to teacher quality, English language acquisition, and graduation rates.