



# NEWS RELEASE

## Utah State Board of Education

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### Utah Public School Enrollment Declines for First Time Since 2000 *Low Kindergarten Enrollment, Increase in Home School, Private School Enrollment Noted*

SALT LAKE CITY – Utah’s K-12 public schools recorded 1,552 fewer students enrolled in 2020 than in 2019, according to data released today by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE). This represents a 0.23 percent decline with a total of 665,306 students enrolled this year. It is the first decline in student enrollment since 2000 which had a 0.15 percent decline, USBE noted.

Moderate growth in student enrollment was seen in grades 8 -12. Except for second grade, however, all lower grades showed a decline in growth, particularly kindergarten which experienced a 3.93 percent decline in enrollment representing 1,457 fewer students, USBE data showed. Kindergarten is optional in Utah though most children do enroll.

“Enrollment counts are especially important this year as schools contend with effects from the pandemic,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sydnee Dickson. “In addition to our annual October 1 head count, the Utah State Board of Education is taking additional enrollment counts throughout the year to help the state, districts, and charter schools keep track of students in this environment.”

An enrollment count in September found that public school exit codes for students showed a decided upturn in both home schooling options for younger children and a larger than normal migration to private school options, USBE data showed. There was also a drop in the enrollment of students in all grades who were not in a Utah school the previous year, indicating a decline of in-migration to the state.

A data point of concern is the decline in the number of students designated as economically disadvantaged; an 8.28 percent drop – or more than 17,000 students. USBE is working with districts and charters to get clarity on the issue. This does not mean that students are missing or not actually enrolled. The code of the data that indicates a decrease may be due to federal policy that continued free school lunch for all through the end of the calendar year. This means parents would not have to fill out an eligibility form to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, the measure used for calculating economic disadvantage among students.

More data from the October 1 census of Utah public schools can be found on the [USBE website](#).

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