



Proclamation: Honoring Utah State Board of Education Staff April 2021

Proclamation of Accomplishment

from the Chair of the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) and State Superintendent of Public Instruction honoring USBE staff for their significant contributions to public education

WHEREAS, the staff for the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) is a model of dedicated professionalism;

WHEREAS, USBE staff adeptly employ an array of knowledge, skills and abilities to ensure the state's elected leaders have factual and pertinent information about Utah's public schools upon which to base their decisions;

WHEREAS, USBE staff also assist, lead, and promote accountability to the goals and requirements set by elected leaders;

WHEREAS, the fiscal, policy, legal, and service challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant earthquake, and various incidents of civil unrest have also contributed to the heightened workload and responsibilities of USBE staff;

WHEREAS, USBE staff members worked extraordinary and stressful hours during the past year to ensure public education services continued uninterrupted;

WHEREAS, USBE staff consistently provided exceptional service to the public and schools, sometimes in the face of personal risk to their and their families' health;

WHEREAS, Facility staff deeply cleaned the USBE office building and kept it in top working order throughout the pandemic;

WHEREAS, Purchasing and Implementation staff put in dozens of extra hours handling donations, tracking down and purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) for schools and supported state purchasing in its efforts to expand the state cooperative contracts related to information technology solutions for innovative ways to respond to the pandemic;

WHEREAS, Mailroom staff and staff from throughout the agency helped receive, sort, load, and deliver donated and purchased PPE products to schools allowing them to reopen in the fall;

WHEREAS, Child Nutrition Programs staff approved and distributed 70 waivers, provided support, updates and encouragement with monthly town hall meetings and emails, and worked with the Department of Workforce Services to roll-out the P-EBT program all in a concerted effort to ease the burden of providing meals to students in various ways during the pandemic;

WHEREAS, Information Technology staff researched and used technology to facilitate the work and communication needs among internal and external customers, and made the transition from in-person work to remote work smooth for the entire agency staff, and accommodated USBE's move to online meetings;

WHEREAS, Communications and Information Technology staff teamed to create and populate a webpage in a matter of days to provide critical communications and resources to the community and schools;

WHEREAS, Teaching and Learning staff instituted advisory committees across multiple subjects, made up of a representative sample of local education agencies to ensure the supports USBE were providing in those content areas were timely and responsive to the needs of stakeholders;

WHEREAS, Dual Language Immersion staff worked with local education agencies in quickly developing online materials in a variety of languages for what had been in-person instruction;

WHEREAS, Educator Licensing staff provided flexibility with deadlines and testing requirements for educator licensing, and answered questions and created guidance documents to support educators and local education agencies;

WHEREAS, Educator Development staff continued to support educator development and created new educator engagement and educator exit surveys;

WHEREAS, Prevention and At-Risk Programs staff collaborated with mental health professionals and stepped-up efforts to help district and charter school students with issues involving absenteeism, dropout prevention, suicide prevention, bullying prevention and promoting restorative practices;

WHEREAS, Safe and Healthy Schools staff collaborated with health and mental health professionals to work with school nurses and improve counseling programs for students;

WHEREAS, Data and Statistics staff have worked diligently to determine the effect of the pandemic on student attendance, and worked with Assessment and Teaching and Learning staff in understanding the effects of the pandemic on student learning;

WHEREAS, Financial Operations staff assisted local education agencies and private schools with federal and state grant programs (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, Emergency Assistance for Non-Public Schools, Coronavirus Relief Fund) and the procurement of PPE, broadband technology, classroom supplies, and COVID testing supplies supporting school and district efforts to reopen and remain open;

WHEREAS, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Programs and Related State Initiatives staff reviewed and expedited Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) I applications and are currently reviewing the ESSER II applications to get these funds out to local education agencies, and pivoted to virtual learning for the Assessment Capable Learners professional learning that has been offered to a cohort of 150 local education agency and school team members;

WHEREAS, Legal and Policy staff facilitated the Board's waiver of 29 Board rule provisions for the 2019-20 school year and the waiver of 15 Board rule provisions for the 2020-21 school year and reviewed and approved school district and charter school requests for a waiver from the 990-hour requirement for the 2020-21 school year and supported extra Board meetings to guide and support local education agencies as they prepared to begin a new school year under a pandemic, and negotiated an online legislative session with both the Board and legislators;

WHEREAS, Special Education staff provided local education agencies, parents and disability advocacy groups with legal and programmatic technical assistance to ensure students with disabilities continued to receive required services and support during school dismissals;

WHEREAS, Special Education staff further provided dispute resolution with contractors to ensure access to virtual options like individualized education plan facilitation, mediation, and due process hearings to ensure that schools and families could continue to access these services and adapted required trainings to ensure schools could participate virtually;

WHEREAS, Special Education staff further adapted the statewide annual Law Institute, in a matter of a few months, into a virtual format to meet the needs of stakeholders, and adapted in person co-teaching sessions, coaching and mentoring sessions to be done virtually;

WHEREAS, Safe and Healthy Schools staff worked with both local education agencies and mental health professionals to keep services flowing to students at a time of great family and personal stress;

WHEREAS, Educational Equity staff worked to ensure each student was treated with dignity and treated equitably during a time of heightened tensions attributable to both the pandemic and social unrest in the nation;

WHEREAS, Student Data Privacy staff responded to many questions, assembled guidance on remote learning and student confidentiality, wrote, filmed, and edited guidance concerning the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and virtual learning, and worked with the Department of Health on developing model policies and consent forms;

WHEREAS, Career & Technical Education staff developed and implemented numerous virtual professional learning opportunities as well as student competitions and educational activities using multiple platforms, and were able to quickly implement and adapt opportunities for students to continue completing their pathway programs and certifications;

WHEREAS, Adult Education staff provided virtual professional development through a two-day statewide conference, weekly collaborative calls, monthly data analysis meetings and training for remote diagnostic assessments, and worked to provide NearPod licenses to all Adult Education programs and organizational memberships with ProLiteracy and Essential Education;

WHEREAS, Family and Community Engagement staff provided training to districts and schools in how to effectively conduct home visits, which resulted in an increase in home visits this year;

WHEREAS, Assessment and Accountability staff, working with the Assessment and Accountability Policy Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee, developed a plan to collect information and mitigate risks to state assessment by adjusting testing windows and developing/supporting remote test administration as feasible; developed a plan for collecting and interpreting 2021 data, led work to seek and obtain relief from state and federal school accountability determinations using data gathered during a pandemic, created several communication documents to help local education agencies address known concerns to administering state assessments, and curated a document detailing formative assessment tools to support teachers' efforts to measure and address disrupted learning;

WHEREAS, Youth in Custody (YIC) staff adapted monitoring schedules and activities to allow for virtual monitoring activities and provided ongoing technical assistance to local education agency YIC programs to support them in providing educational services during the soft closure and beyond, and organized and executed a series of webinars for Check and Connect Mentors statewide, using many USBE colleagues as presenters to better connect and more effectively mentor YIC students;

WHEREAS, School LAND Trust staff supported principals, school community councils and charter trust land councils in amending school plans to address the immediate needs of students and assisted with Board rule waivers allowing school community councils to complete their work online and extended due dates allowing schools to receive delayed funding, as needed, and created online training modules for staff and volunteers to receive required board and council training from home;

WHEREAS, Internal Audit staff efficiently handled 411 concerns between March 15, 2020 and March, 8 2021 – a 43 percent increase over the previous year, and collaborated with the USBE and other state agencies, to ensure provision of accurate and consistent information, and handled a 46 percent increase in concerns (a total of 57 concerns) from parents/guardians submitted to the School Fees Hotline from April 2020 – March 2021 as compared to the prior year;

WHEREAS, Communication staff responding to hundreds of constituent questions and concerns via phone, e-mail and social media posting regarding the status of school openings and closings with professionalism and empathy;

WHEREAS, Superintendency continued to look after staff needs and concerns and kept staff informed about existing workplace conditions and plans for a return to work;

WHEREAS, all staff offices have coordinated and cooperated to assure that all of the Board's functions continue to be performed efficiently and professionally;

WHEREAS, Board staff members have made personal sacrifices to perform above and beyond expectations;

WHEREAS, the success of our schools would be hindered without their concerted efforts;

WHEREAS, USBE staff give generously of their patience, skill, intelligence, and time; and

WHEREAS, USBE staff continue to respond promptly to both Board needs and systemic needs:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Chair of the Utah State Board of Education and State Superintendent of Public Instruction extend their appreciation to USBE staff members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this proclamation be sent to the employees of the Utah State Board of Education.



Mark Huntsman, Board Chair



Sydnee Dickson, State Superintendent