

# EDUCATIONAL IN



THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Report to the Education Interim  
Committee

## Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education

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**STATUTORY  
REQUIREMENT**

**U.C.A. Section 53E-10-702** requires the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to submit a report on innovative and successful K-12 practices in Utah and other states, prioritizing practices in Utah and in the report, propose changes to remove barriers to implementation of successful practices.

**U.C.A. Section 53E-10-703** requires USBE to submit a report on ULEAD research and other activities including examples of innovative practice reports and the current status of relationships with participating institutions.

The State Board is required to report on this program to the Education Interim Committee annually on or before November 30. This year marks the third year for this report.

# Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education is required to report on successful K -12 practices in Utah and other states and propose policy changes to remove barriers to implementation successful practices.

Notably, successful and innovative practices across topic areas rely on additional staff expertise and time, requiring more staff, more training, and more or flexible time to implement work. A continued commitment to well-defined data collection and accurate reporting is also highlighted need.

This report includes a brief review of report findings, limitations or barriers, and recommendations for supporting best practice implementation at scale. An overview of ULEAD additional materials, current partnerships, related legislation, and ULEAD program updates are also included.

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## BACKGROUND

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Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education was created to find, research, and highlight proven practices in Utah schools for replication statewide. ULEAD partners with practitioners, researchers, and education organizations to develop and curate resources, foster collaboration, and drive systemic change for improved student outcomes. The ULEAD Clearinghouse is a growing repository of innovative, effective, and efficient practice resources and tools to support educators.

In fall 2022, the Steering Committee met twice in person to develop and refine the focus priorities for 2022. The committee reconvened in January 2023 to update the priorities and collaborated digitally in April. A September 2023 meeting completed the quarterly meeting requirement for the year. In addition to the formalized role of informing priorities, Steering Committee members have provided valuable insight and feedback to program activities and plans.

## REPORTS

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The Steering Committee identified the 2022-2023 ULEAD Focus Priorities as:

**Educator Retention and Job Satisfaction, with an emphasis on Teacher Job Satisfaction**

**Student Attendance**

**Academic Success through Strategic Engagement through Technology**

**Academic Success through Social Emotional Supports Grounded in Academic Practice**

Priorities were based on contributions from the field, stakeholder surveys, and recent data. A framing of these issues with national and local research statistics was completed and shared for feedback. The priorities were shared with State Board Members at a program overview in the January 2023 meeting, in addition to other groups including the USBE Finance Committee, Data & Statistics Department, Prevention Team, and Leadership Council. They were provided to Deans at institutions of higher education in Utah. The ULEAD focus priorities made up four of the five recommended data topics proposed to Utah Data Research Center from USBE this year.

In September 2023, the Steering Committee reconvened to reassess the current priorities. Going forward, the Steering Committee highlighted that student achievement should be a continual measure for identifying outliers with specific subgroups as focus priorities. The initial identification of academic achievement outliers includes English Language Academic Achievement outliers and Middle School Mathematics Academic Achievement.

As these focus areas are new and ongoing, the findings and recommendations of this report are specific to the outliers from the prior year. Additionally, some research partners granted no-cost extensions due to disruption from COVID-19 have completed their work and had findings to report.

## **Focus Priority Reports: Findings & Recommendations**

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### **Educator Retention and Job Satisfaction**

A report from six high-retention Utah schools expressed three major themes that contributed directly to job satisfaction. Satisfied educators consistently attributed their

fulfillment to administrators who 1) trusted teachers as professionals, 2) valued teachers' time, and 3) positively mediated conflict. Reaffirming existing literature, site-based examples revealed that teacher satisfaction was less linked to institutional factors like compensation, class size, or curriculum and more linked to attitudes between administrative leadership and faculty. Some site-specific examples in Utah include:

- Opportunities that allow for teacher flexibility and autonomy
- Involving teachers in interview processes
- Providing specific, positive feedback to teachers about their practice
- Allowing for teachers to focus on teaching responsibilities and reducing outside burdens, including protected work time and additional pay for additional work
- Skillful mediation of difficult situations between staff members or teachers and families
- Administrative time in classes and working directly with students

Currently, Utah State Board of Education does not collect identified job satisfaction specific information, making identifying satisfied outliers difficult. The Educator Engagement Survey and School Culture Surveys are completed anonymously to encourage authentic responses, however; this means that the provided information can only give a broad perspective on teacher job satisfaction. Retention rates are merely a helpful proxy to identify teacher satisfaction, but it is possible for retention to occur for other reasons, and, being satisfied or retained may not be an indication of quality student outcomes. If identifying outliers in teacher satisfaction is to happen, identifiable data will have to be collected, necessitating additional data collection in order to allow for authentic responses on existing surveys.

The Wallace Foundation review of 20 years of evidence on principals concludes that principal effect extends beyond teacher satisfaction and "if a school district could invest in improving the performance of just one adult in a school building, investing in the principal is likely the most efficient way to affect student achievement" (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 40). In order to improve teacher satisfaction, current literature and case-specific examples from Utah schools indicate that investing in teachers through refining of administrative practice is key.

### **Student Attendance**

A report from seven Utah schools across four districts plus a public charter school found schools with effective attendance plans include:

1. Relationship building with students and families
2. Accurate attendance tracking
3. Timely communication
4. Parent education

School leaders at each site stressed the importance of building consensus with parents on why school attendance is important. Some site-specific examples of attendance strategies working in Utah schools include:

- Allocating time, attention, and staff to specifically address attendance with students and families, including hiring additional aides or creating attendance engagement teams
- Building relationships between staff and students with daily greetings at the door, one-on-one conversations, and celebrations of meeting goals
- Building relationships between staff and families with transportation support,

resource connections, and use of a two-way communication platform

- Home visits
- Parent education during school events, meetings, and home visits
- Preventative identification through timely and accurate attendance records and parent notifications
- A proactive focus on increasing students' joy and interest in attending school

Accurate attendance tracking is aided by the efforts of the Utah Legislature and USBE through recently mandating common attendance definitions and reporting. The emphasis on systems and processes that allow for consistent, accurate reporting statewide must continue.

The biggest barrier to addressing attendance issues locally was the staff time required. Some schools used funding to hire additional staff, while others included attendance responsibilities in school-wide staff responsibilities. Creating more flexible uses of time and staff to make phone calls, hold conferences, and complete home visits was a needed action highlighted in reports. Additionally, schools with successful home visits allotted resources to training teachers and staff about home visit procedures.

### **Academic Success through Strategic Engagement with Technology**

While not a full practice report, one school-based promising practice is the development of Junior Technology Credentials based on similar expert educator credentialing programs. In this innovative solution, teachers with industry certification modified course work and requirements for adult certifications to elementary-aged students. They integrated technology learning with coursework and students celebrated achievements

through digital badging and community showcase celebrations.

The practice is easily adapted to any platform and can be modified for various grade levels. Additionally, credentialing in this case study was done with technology, but similar credentialing could be done for any skill set. The limitation to the practice is that it requires a high level of educator skill and pedagogical knowledge, ideally with experience in badging or certifications themselves. The educators that developed the coursework sought out certifications on their own and dedicated their own time and expertise to creating the program for students.

In order for this innovation to be more widely used, educators would need additional professional learning access, time, and potential funding to become certified in technology tools before course integration can occur. This process can be conducted without technology but would still require additional expertise and planning for educators to fully develop the practice at a site level.

## **Recommendation Summary**

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Data to identify outliers will be improved when measures, such as the effort to define and require attendance reporting, are in place. Accuracy and consistency of information is critical to outlier identification.

Attendance supports require additional staff, training, and time. Similarly, time, training, and funding for training were common barriers when supporting administrator and educator development across reported topic areas.

## Additional Reports

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- A doctoral candidate is researching “A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study on Teacher Retention and Job Satisfaction in Utah” and has committed to sharing outcomes with ULEAD upon completion expected in Winter 2023.
- Early survey reporting for the University of Utah study *Utah Principal and Teacher Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic* identified organizational conditions that positively support educator wellbeing. A full report is in development.
- An initial report of the Ogden School District multi-tiered attendance system has been developed in partnership with the USBE Attendance Team. A final report will be available pending updated attendance data from the 2023-2024 school year.
- The STEM Action Center has identified outliers in strategic engagement with technology in collaboration with the Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC). They have indicated a willingness to partner with ULEAD to qualitatively explore the practices at schools of interest highlighted by the data for upcoming study.
- The study *Bright Spots in Utah’s Implementation of Expanded Distance Learning: Evidence from an enrollment increased at Utah Virtual Academy* in partnership with the University of Utah was recently completed and a full report is forthcoming.
- The study *Promoting Equity in Online Student Engagement through Technology Enhanced Zoom Classes* in partnership with the University of Utah is expected to conclude in Summer 2024.
- ULEAD has developed a draft Practitioner Report highlighting the use of wellness rooms and educator capacity building leading to increased class time for students in Washington County Schools. A final report is forthcoming.

- Several reports from institutes of higher education were recently completed and are pending publication.
  - The study *Measuring the Impact of Multi-tiered School Mental Health Supports on Rural Student Wellbeing* in collaboration with the University of Utah is complete.
  - The *Baby Boot Camp: An Equity and Access Case Study* addressing young learners with access to preparation for kindergarten and early elementary school conducted in collaboration with the University of Utah is complete.
  - A Brigham Young University report on a student reading anxiety intervention was truncated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but initial findings about student reading anxiety were submitted.
- There are research projects outstanding from awards made prior to the pandemic. These have been given no-cost extensions to complete research in progress. These include:
  - A longitudinal study on the impact of Kindergarten in Utah with the Utah Education Policy Center. Part one of this study is complete and awaiting posting on the website.
  - A study titled *Student Achievement, STEM Course-Taking, Graduation, and Postsecondary Outcomes in Utah Charter Schools* with the University of Utah School of Education.
  - A study titled *Successful Utah Efforts that Demonstrate Meeting Differentiated Student Learning Needs* with Utah State University
- A researcher at the University of Utah is investigating the impact of assigned case managers in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP). The work requires a data sharing agreement between USBE and the Department of Workforce Services. The researcher anticipates impact information related to attendance and possible

social-emotional outcomes that they have committed to share with ULEAD. This is a multi-year investigation.

## **2023-2024 Topic Update**

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In September, the ULEAD Steering Committee reevaluated the current focus priorities and determined that Student Achievement should be a continual metric for outlier identification, with varying subgroups or topic areas as the highlighted focus priorities. Student Achievement for English Language Learners and in Middle School Mathematics were identified as the first areas of priority for the 2023-2024 year.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

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**Higher Education** After meeting with Deans at all Utah Institutes of Higher Education with Schools or Colleges of Education in December and January, ULEAD developed a submission process for Innovative Practice Reports. Further work to share this process and the Innovative Practice Report outline have resulted in the following partnerships:

Utah State University has committed to promoting ULEAD work and supporting up-front professional development needs to begin Innovative Practice Reports. As of September, Utah State anticipates researchers working on four Innovative Practice Reports over the academic year, each aligned to a different priority focus.

Utah Valley University has a current Interagency Agreement to develop an Innovative Practice Report on administrator job satisfaction and burnout. The fall leadership course at

Utah Valley University also has committed to annually having students use the Innovative Practice Report model for semester-long projects. Students use available data to identify outliers, complete short literature reviews, and write a report modeled after the Innovative Practice Report template as part of their required coursework and submit their findings to ULEAD for possible publication.

Researchers at the University of Utah are currently finishing no-cost extensions to finalize research existing before the COVID-19 pandemic. One researcher plans to submit an updated Innovative Practice Report proposal to work with teacher satisfaction outliers following over 9,000 responses to a statewide survey.

Brigham Young University (BYU) and the Wasatch School District are working on two projects. They have identified outliers in literacy and numeracy at specific grade levels and have conducted on-site observations to learn from teacher teams. Due to the initial success of these projects, Wasatch District has a current request to extend their outlier identification across more grade levels and is committed to reporting progress and outlier practices through ULEAD. Additionally, Wasatch District is working with the other BYU research districts to develop a robust, ongoing process that draws on outlier identification and reporting.

**Utah Teacher Fellows** ULEAD worked with the Utah Teacher Fellows in February to share the ULEAD program and model for Innovative Practice Reports. Fellows chose to work independently or in teams to find and research outliers in priority topic areas. In July, the Fellows hosted a convening to share their work over the last two years. Included in their presentations were one-page summaries of their projects with ULEAD. One draft report on

attendance garnered early attention, and the Prevention Team used the information when meeting with the Education Interim Committee in early August. Two Innovative Practice Reports and one Practitioner Praxis Report resulted from the first working partnership. Additional reports and supporting documents are shared with researchers as supplemental background information to inform their work on various topics.

**Utah Education Network** The Utah Education Network (UEN) was originally contracted to create two Bright Spot video series about mathematics and literacy related to the prior working summits conducted by ULEAD. In the fall of 2022, the first set of videos highlighting the K-12 mathematics framework was completed. These videos are hosted on UEN's professional learning site as well as ongoing runs on UEN-TV.

The early literacy team helped identify and vet schools demonstrating competence and outcomes with Science of Reading implementation. In spring 2023, UEN and ULEAD conducted site visits with the early literacy team to record interviews and classroom footage. Filming will continue in the fall, but a series of clips to support teaching and literacy instruction, along with necessary system support structures, are being developed. These videos will be housed on UEN and run on UEN-TV in addition to being included in the Science of Reading Repository.

**Utah Coalition for Educational Technology (UCET)** ULEAD worked with UCET to develop an LEA practice highlight area at the annual UCET conference in March. LEAs were invited to host poster-type table sessions highlighting innovative or promising practices in their area. ULEAD also held an hour long TedTalk style session with talks about ULEAD, mathematics, innovative teaching practices, and technology. Approximately 2,000 people

attended the two-day conference.

This year, UCET is partnering with the Utah Education Library Media Association (UELMA) to host the annual conference at the Salt Palace, with a goal of 2,500-3,000 attendees. ULEAD was invited to help in program design, leading to a dedicated room space for research in education. Sessions in this room will feature research and researchers in education with practical implementation advice. Innovative Practice Report contributors will be encouraged to apply. ULEAD has also been offered the Highlight Hive poster session and LEA highlight space to feature partners and innovative practices.

**Connections** ULEAD is a part of multiple education initiatives and groups throughout USBE and the broader community including:

- Center for Continuous Improvement, School Improvement Growth Group
- Secondary School Transition Team, Partnership Workgroup
- Better Way Forward, K-12 Initiatives Team
- USBE Attendance Workgroup
- USBE Data and Statistics
- Intermountain Healthcare Foundation
- Science of Reading, Change Management Planning Team

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

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### **Related Legislation**

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**Science of Reading** The 2022 Utah State Legislature’s Senate Bill (S.B.) 127: Early Outcomes Improvement directs and supports a collaborative partnership between USBE, the Center for the School of the Future, and ULEAD Education to develop and maintain an online repository of digital science of reading and science of reading instruction resources that are accessible to public school teachers, school leaders, parents, and educator preparation programs.

- ULEAD and USBE secured an agreement through the RFP processes that was approved in the April 2023 Board Meeting. All partners were included in the RFP process. The agreement with American Institutes of Research (AIR) will result in monthly curated and vetted materials being posted to the Early Literacy Repository throughout 2023 and 2024. ULEAD and the Early Literacy team work together monthly to vet materials and AIR will develop additional materials to fill any identified gaps in information. The first round of materials was submitted and reviewed in July.
- In coordination with the USBE Early Literacy Team, UEN and ULEAD have recorded at schools evidencing outstanding practice and promising results with Science of Reading implementation. The resulting video shorts will be featured on the UEN website, UEN-TV, Early Literacy Repository, and the ULEAD website.
- ULEAD was asked to provide input on change management to the team leading the Science of Reading Change Management professional learning with administrators and school leadership teams over the upcoming four years. The first-round cohort has begun in person and online training, with the second cohort starting in early 2024.

**Teacher Innovation Grants** The 2022 Utah State Legislature’s House Bill (H.B.) 486:

Education Innovation Program and related rule R277-918 establish that Local Education Agencies may approve alternative classroom schedules or alternative curriculum. Approved programs can receive up to a \$5,000 grant and program outcomes are reported through ULEAD.

- In the 2023 session, the funding for this bill was updated so that it can be used without expiring if at the end of 5 years the funds are not expended.
- To support this, ULEAD developed application templates that may be used by interested educators to support developing a proposal for their LEA including all parts required in the legislation and rule. Supporting documents are not required but may help educators develop effective and detailed plans. Materials and summaries will be added to a new page on the ULEAD website.
- Approved programs include:
  - Wellness Class at Spanish Fork High School, Nebo School District
  - Courses at Itineris Early College High School
    - Creative Side of Business
    - Design for Good
    - Illustration
  - Courses at Karl G. Maeser Preparatory Academy Foundation
    - Marine Biology Winterm 24
    - Mock Trial Intensive - The Federal Court System
    - Native American and First Nation Arts, Crafts, and Cultures
    - The Art of Storymaking: The Novel, Poetry, and Personal Narrative
    - Broadway Bound
    - First Robotics Competition
    - Roller Coaster Physics

## Communication

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A communication and engagement plan were developed, and the Steering Committee provided feedback on planned activities. Initial activities have included updating the ULEAD look, developing contact lists, solidifying an online presence, and working toward a new website. The initial plan for ULEAD was to increase awareness and understanding of what ULEAD is and can do.

**Design** The ULEAD logo and colors have been updated to comply with web safe standards and coordinate with USBE branding guidelines. All materials are in the process of being updated to coordinate and future collateral will use the new styles.

**Contact Lists** ULEAD had no existing contact lists. A contact list with tagging system has been developed identifying how contacts are related to ULEAD, such as if they are a researcher, attended a ULEAD working summit, or are a former Steering Committee member. This list serves as a basis for digital communication including access to the USBE MailChimp account. The contact list is continually updated and maintained. ULEAD also established a [ulead@schools.utah.gov](mailto:ulead@schools.utah.gov) email address for general communication.

**Social Media** ULEAD has developed social media accounts across major platforms. Social posting is currently designed to increase knowledge about ULEAD and foster authentic engagement with Utah educators. Media focus will shift to promoting updated focus priorities and highlighting repository resources and program activities as they are available.

**Website** The USBE website is currently working toward a major transition expected to occur around the first of the year. ULEAD has conducted an audit of the website and has submitted a migration map to the Communications team. A new website layout has been formulated and, when the new site is available, resources will include items required by ULEAD legislation such as an expert database. Materials that do not meet the ULEAD vision will not be transferred. An updated video introduction is in development to include on the new site. Prior to the new site being available, ULEAD materials will be updated, but significant layout and information changes will not be implemented.

**Presenting** ULEAD has engaged in several state and national conference opportunities this year to build awareness of the program and potential for collaboration, in addition to other presentation activities.

- Director Everette shared a program overview and focus priorities at the USBE Board Meeting in January and with department meetings, including Leadership Council, throughout USBE.
- ULEAD shared the mathematics working summit report and UEN mathematics video series at the Utah Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference in February.
- ULEAD hosted the Highlight Hive and an hour of Best Practice talks at the Utah Coalition for Educational Technology conference in March.
- Director Everette presented “Elevating Proven Practices: A Statewide Model for Success” at the ASCD Annual Conference in April.
- Director Everette was featured on the UCET podcast in April.
- The ULEAD Twitter account hosted the #UTEdChat in May.
- ULEAD had a table at the Show Up for Teachers conference in July.

## Program Direction

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**Program Model Format** At the Steering Committee meeting in fall 2022, members requested a visual model to explain how ULEAD works that would help readers envision how and where they could interact with the program. The result was a cyclical model that draws on the field to inform topics, research topics, communicate results, and then engage educators with the practices highlighted. The full model also details how outliers may be identified by program, internal data, or external researchers.

**New Staff** In August, ULEAD created and hired a Research II position dedicated to ULEAD-specific data and statistics work. This position will focus on using existing data to identify outliers, developing new collection methods, or coordinating with other data agencies where necessary, and working with Higher Education partners to ensure they have easier access to reliable outlier information. This position will enable partners to work on the qualitative research components by identifying outliers quantitatively. This also increases the ability of ULEAD to conduct viable program evaluation or other types of data-specific research within the agency.

**Planning** The Program Logic Model was updated for the 2023-2024 year. Included are activities designed to meet outputs and outcomes in both the short and long term. In 2022-2023 the program focus was to create a better awareness and understanding of what ULEAD is and does, develop systems and networks for sharing information, and solidify the goals of the program. With those in place, the focus this year is on fostering and solidifying partnerships with higher education supported by better internal support for

outlier identification. As materials in the repository grow, the goal is to increase engagement with available resources. Moving all processes towards a set of ULEAD Standard Operating Procedures will help clarify the program and director roles, responsibilities, and create consistent outcomes.