

EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION



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

Grant for Professional Learning and Elementary Teacher Preparation Assessment Grant

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**STATUTORY
REQUIREMENT**

U.C.A. Sections 53F-5-214

The state board shall annually report to the Education Interim Committee on or before the November interim committee meeting regarding the administration and outcomes of the grant described in this section.

U.C.A. Sections 53F-5-215

The state board shall annually report to the Education Interim Committee on or before the November interim committee meeting regarding the administration and outcomes of the grant described in this section.

Grant for Professional Learning and Elementary Teacher Preparation Assessment Grant

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During legislative session 2020, HB114 was passed, however due to COVID-19 disruptions, the bill did not receive funding until the 2021 session. The Grant for Professional Learning is meant to provide preschool through grade three teachers with professional learning opportunities in early literacy and/or early mathematics. Many eligible districts and charter schools, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), chose to apply for this grant. The grant provided an allocation of \$3,965,000 which was distributed to the 111 LEA applicants during the 2022-2023 school year, using a per teacher allotment. Of those LEAs, the majority chose to support early literacy professional learning opportunities. A pre and post survey was distributed to measure outcomes of professional learning regarding deepening educator understanding of early literacy and/or early math and applying the knowledge learned in their educational practices.

Background - Grant for Professional Learning

The purpose of the Grant for Professional Learning is to award grants to LEAs to provide preschool through grade three teachers with professional learning opportunities in early literacy and/or early mathematics. LEAs completed an application that includes the comprehensive, evidence-based, job-embedded, focused and sustained, professional learning opportunities the LEA will provide using the grant funds. These professional learning opportunities must be based on assessment data, aligned with the professional learning standards, and targeted to achieving their local and state early learning goals.

Funding - Grant for Professional Learning

The Grant for Professional Learning allocation of \$3,935,000 was distributed to eligible LEAs using a per teacher allotment. The funding formula used was calculated by dividing the total amount of grant funds by the total number of preschool through grade three teacher applicants, using employee data from the previous school year. If an LEA chooses to forgo these grant funds, the grant funds are reallocated back to those LEAs who applied.

Funding for the Grants for Professional learning may be used in the following ways; teacher stipends to attend trainings, presenter fees, coaching supports, substitute teachers, to hire a coach or specialist, and supplies and materials for teacher professional learning. Funds may not be used for the purchase of property, equipment, other services, student materials and supplies, or travel.

Participation - Grant for Professional Learning

Any LEAs who have preschool through grade three teachers are eligible to apply for the Grant for Professional Learning funds. In FY24, ninety-one percent (114/125) of eligible LEAs applied to receive these funds. One hundred percent (41/41) of districts and eighty-seven percent (73/84) of charter schools chose to participate in providing early literacy and/or mathematics professional learning opportunities for their preschool through grade three teachers. Of the 114 LEAs, eighty-seven percent choose to support only early literacy, 6% choose to support only early mathematics, and 7% choose to support both early literacy and early mathematics.

Outcomes - Grant for Professional Learning

A pre and post survey were created and shared with participating LEAs to measure professional learning outcomes of the Grant for Professional Learning. Each August, a pre survey is shared with LEA leaders and is intended to provide the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) with feedback on the current needs of educators in grades P-3; specifically in the areas of early literacy and/or early math. Likewise each May, the post survey is shared and is intended to provide the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) with feedback to determine if the early literacy and/or early math professional learning opportunities provided had an impact.

In FY24, a total of 2,270 educators participated in the pre survey. The post survey had a total of 1,617 educator responses. Sixty-nine percent participated in literacy professional learning and sixteen percent participated in mathematics professional learning. Fifteen percent of those who started the survey did not complete it.

Literacy (LETRS) Professional Learning Outcomes

According to post survey results, the literacy professional learning challenged ninety-eight percent of educators to always or sometimes think differently about their instructional practice. Ninety-one percent of educators stated that the literacy professional learning deepened the understanding of early literacy. Ninety-two percent of educators directly used the knowledge, skills, and strategies learned in the literacy professional learning with their students. Ninety-three percent reported that the literacy professional learning helped them to continue to grow as a professional.

Mathematics Professional Learning Outcomes

According to post survey results, the math professional learning challenged eighty-eight percent of educators to always or sometimes think differently about their instructional practice. Seventy-five percent of educators stated that the math professional learning deepened the understanding of early math. Eighty percent of educators directly used the knowledge, skills, and strategies learned in the math professional learning with their students. Eighty-one percent reported that the math professional learning helped them to continue to grow as a professional.

Executive Summary - Elementary teacher preparation assessment grant.

Candidates seeking licensure in early childhood, elementary, or special education, will be required to demonstrate their knowledge in the science of reading related to literacy instruction by passing the Utah Foundations of Reading Assessment (UFORA). This grant will cover the cost of the initial administration of the assessment. The first three years will be a pilot to gather data. In the spring of 2024, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) established a cut score of 240 for the UFORA. Beginning September 1, 2024, candidates will need to pass the assessment at the established cut score to receive their teaching license. USBE will collect data on the number of candidates who complete and pass the assessment.

Background - Elementary teacher preparation assessment grant.

Beginning in the fall of 2021, the USBE began awarding grants to institutions of higher education for the cost of the initial attempt of the literacy preparation assessment for applicants graduating from universities during the relevant year. This literacy preparation assessment is a requirement for those seeking licensure in the following areas of concentration: early childhood, elementary, or special education. Institutions of higher education may apply for the grant by submitting an application to the State Board of Education, including an estimate of the number and the names of prospective license applicants. USBE issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking a qualified vendor to provide a teacher literacy preparation assessment to measure teacher candidate's foundational knowledge in the science of reading related to literacy instruction described in Utah Code Annotated § 53F-5-215. An RFP was run and Pearson's Foundations of Reading Assessment was chosen.

Funding - Elementary teacher preparation assessment grant.

The maximum contract budget for this assessment is \$275,000.00 for year 1 and \$375,000.00 per year for years 2-5, for a maximum contract total of \$1,775,000.00. Funds will cover the initial administration of the assessment for teacher candidates in special education, early childhood,

and elementary education licensure programs.

A voucher system was available beginning October 2021. Pearson currently provides a voucher model that will allow an individual to register for the test without paying the registration fee. Candidates will use vouchers as a form of full payment when registering for the assessment. Pearson works with the USBE to develop and monitor USBE voucher purchases and distribution. In the year 2023-2024, approximately 3,000 vouchers were used.

Participation - Elementary teacher preparation assessment grant.

During the 2023-2024 school year, all nine Utah universities participated in the mandatory pilot. Participation in the pilot means that graduates are required to take the teacher preparation assessment for literacy, but any score will be accepted as passing.

In Spring of 2024, after 3 years of data collection, USBE and a group of science of reading experts determined a passing score of 240 on the UFORA through a standards setting process. Beginning September 1, 2024, the state established cut score will be used to determine who is eligible to receive their license in the following license areas: early childhood, elementary, or special education.

Outcomes - Elementary teacher preparation assessment grant.

The 2023-2024 school year was the second full year of data collection with all universities participating. Data validation is currently underway to ensure the accuracy and integrity.