

EDUCATION

**THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

Report to the Education Interim
Committee

Special Needs Opportunity Scholarship

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Special Needs Opportunity Scholarship Annual Report

STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

U.C.A. Section [53E-1-202.1], requires the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to annually submit a report on the program to the Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee that includes: the amount of tuition and fees a qualifying school charges; administrative costs of the program; the number of scholarship students that are eligible students described in Subsection 53E-7-401(1)(a) and the number of scholarship students that are eligible students described in Subsection 53E-7-401(1)(b) from each school district; standards used by the scholarship granting organization to determine whether a student is an eligible student; and savings to the state and LEAs as a result of scholarship students exiting the public school system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Carson Smith Scholarship was created in 2005 and has been awarding scholarships to students who qualify for special education since then. In 2021 the Utah's Special Needs Opportunity Scholarship Program was added. It provides a dollar-for-dollar tax credit to individuals who donate to a scholarship-granting organization (SGO), which is nonprofit organization that provides scholarships to students with special needs to pay for private school tuition, textbooks, and therapies. (Section 53E-7-404; USBE R277-626) During the 2024 legislative session the Carson Smith Scholarship was limited to current recipients, and it has been legislated to combine with the Special Needs Opportunity Scholarship moving forward. The combined programs are now called the Carson Smith Opportunity Scholarship.

Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGO)

Utah currently has one SGO which is the Children First Education Fund (CFEF). They are located at, 1234 W South Jordan Parkway Ste C2, South Jordan, UT 84081

Tuition Reporting:

Currently, there are 45 schools that are approved to be qualified schools. Due to the combining of the two scholarships, the list of participating schools has now been combined for the 2024-2025 school year. Below are the reported tuition rates of qualified schools during each school year:

School Name:	2024-25 Annual Tuition Rates (may not include additional fees)					
	PreK	K-half time	K-full time	Grade 1-6	Grade 7-8	Grade 9-12
American Heritage		\$ 4,716.00	\$ 7,994.00	\$ 10,347.00	\$ 10,753.00	\$ 12,691.00
Anthem Preparatory	\$ 5,310.00	\$ 5,900.00	\$ 5,900.00	\$ 5,900.00	\$ 5,900.00	NA
Arches Academy	\$ 9,995.00	\$ 9,995.00	\$ 9,995.00	\$ 10,395.00	\$ 10,795.00	NA
Autism Solutions Draper	\$ 8,285.00	\$ 8,285.00	\$ 13,100.00	\$ 13,100.00	\$ 13,100.00	\$ 13,100.00
Autism Solutions West Jordan	\$ 8,285.00	\$ 8,285.00	\$ 13,100.00	\$ 13,100.00	\$ 13,100.00	\$ 13,100.00
Blessed Sacrament	\$ 4,456.00	NA	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
Breaking Barriers School	\$ 6,000.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
BreakOut School	NA	NA	NA	\$ 7,300.00	\$ 7,300.00	\$ 7,300.00
Carmen B Pingree	\$ 43,000.00	NA	\$ 43,000.00	\$ 43,000.00	\$ 43,000.00	\$ 43,000.00
Crimson Counseling	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 18,000.00
Elizabeth Academy	\$ 20,100.00	NA	\$ 20,100.00	\$ 18,400.00	NA	NA
Elizabeth Academy (Garfield Sch)	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$ 48,400.00	\$ 21,700.00
Faith Baptist Academy	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 4,920.00	\$ 4,920.00	\$ 4,920.00	NA	NA
Heron School	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 14,000.00
Hilltop Christian School	\$ 3,825.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 5,490.00	\$ 6,300.00	NA	NA
JE Cosgriff Memorial	\$ 5,468.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
Juan Diego Catholic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$ 14,685.00
Judge Memorial	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$ 13,581.00
Kearns St Ann	\$ 3,500.00	NA	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
Kids World	\$ 7,188.00	\$ 16,176.00	\$ 16,176.00	\$ 16,176.00	\$ 16,176.00	\$ 16,176.00
Kool Minds Utah	\$ 11,940.00	\$ 7,140.00	\$ 11,940.00	\$ 21,540.00	\$ 21,540.00	NA
Lady of Lourdes	NA	NA	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
Layton Christian Academy	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,700.00
Liahona Preparatory Academy	\$ 4,380.00	\$ 5,040.00	\$ 5,700.00	\$ 5,700.00	\$ 5,700.00	\$ 8,400.00
Madelein Choir	\$ 11,969.00	\$ 11,969.00	\$ 11,969.00	\$ 11,969.00	\$ 11,969.00	\$ 11,969.00
McGillis School	NA	\$ 21,690.00	\$ 21,690.00	\$ 21,690.00	\$ 23,915.00	\$ 34,725.00
Mt Vernon	NA	\$ 8,565.00	\$ 8,565.00	\$ 8,565.00	\$ 8,565.00	\$ 8,565.00
New Hope Academy	NA	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
New Life Christian Academy	\$ 11,500.00	\$ 11,500.00	\$ 11,500.00	\$ 11,500.00	\$ 11,500.00	\$ 11,500.00
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Sch	NA	NA	\$ 9,045.00	\$ 9,045.00	\$ 9,045.00	NA
Realms of Inquiry	NA	NA	NA	\$ 13,800.00	\$ 13,800.00	\$ 13,800.00
Rogue Behavior Services	NA	NA	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 14,000.00
Saint Marguerite Catholic School	\$ 5,000.00	NA	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA	NA
St Andrew	\$ 9,393.28	NA	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
St Francis	\$ 3,298.00	NA	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
St Johns Elementary	NA	\$ 9,320.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00		
St Johns Middle School	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$ 8,912.00	NA
St Joseph Catholic High School	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$ 12,300.00
St Joseph Grade School	\$ 8,912.00	NA	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
St Olaf	\$ 6,000.00	NA	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
St Vincent De Paul	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
The Sammy Center	\$ 14,400.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Trinity Lutheran School	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 8,912.00	NA
Wasatch Academy	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$ 38,000.00	\$ 38,000.00

Administrative Costs Reporting

USBE costs are \$66,401.51 which is 50% of salary and benefits of 1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE). CFEF Administrative Costs, based on received reports are below:

	2023-2024 Administrative Costs		
	Administrative	Marketing	Total Administrative
23-Jul	\$ 12,171.42	\$ 19,146.84	\$ 31,318.26
23-Aug	\$ 43,590.29	\$ 25,432.94	\$ 69,023.23
23-Sep	\$ 11,378.83	\$ 9,459.02	\$ 20,837.85
23-Oct	\$ 9,620.34	\$ 9,254.96	\$ 18,875.30
23-Nov	\$ 25,938.36	\$ 12,491.87	\$ 38,430.23
23-Dec	\$ 25,135.48	\$ 7,970.83	\$ 33,106.31
24-Jan	\$ 28,879.07	\$ 8,239.48	\$ 37,118.55
24-Feb	\$ 15,702.67	\$ 7,985.59	\$ 23,688.26
24-Mar	\$ 18,007.11	\$ 8,673.70	\$ 26,680.81
24-Apr	\$ 17,349.93	\$ 10,445.48	\$ 27,795.41
24-May	\$ 11,938.38	\$ 14,174.13	\$ 26,112.51
24-Jun	\$ 31,380.87	\$ 8,217.16	\$ 39,598.03
Total	\$ 251,092.75	\$ 141,492.00	\$ 392,584.75

Student Recipient Reporting

USBE must report the number of scholarship students that are eligible students described in Subsection 53E-7-401(1)(a) and the number of scholarship students that are eligible students described in Subsection 53E-7-401(1)(b) from each school district. 334 eligible students were awarded scholarships as of June 30, 2024, for a total scholarship amount of \$2,990,896.18 (\$3,252,156.11 in scholarships awarded, minus \$261,259.93 in scholarships waived or returned). Of the 334, zero were eligible siblings who have been awarded scholarships.

2023-2024 Student Recipients	
District of Residence	Number of Recipients
Alpine	27
Beaver	1
Box Elder	1
Cache	5
Canyons	51
Davis	53
Duchesne	3
Garfield	3
Grand County	10
Granite	49
Iron	3
Jordan	39
Juab	11
Millard	2
Morgan	1
Murray	7
Nebo	14
Ogden	2
Provo	6
Park City	1
Salt Lake City	15
Tooele	6
Wasatch	1
Washington County	4
Weber	19

Since the legislation passed, combining the two programs, the Carson Smith Scholarship has experienced a significant number of students opting to transfer to the new combined scholarship. In 2023, the first quarter of funding provided scholarships to 957 Carson Smith recipients, totaling \$1,701,964.00 in funding dispersed. During the 2024 first quarter of funding, 635 students were provided funding, totaling \$1,350,107.83. This decline in students will likely continue as more students opt to participate in the combined Carson Smith Opportunity Scholarship program.

Standards of eligibility determination reporting

CFEF adheres to the standards established in state law for determining eligibility, namely:

- the student is a resident of Utah, and the student has an IEP, or
- is determined by a multidisciplinary evaluation team to be eligible for services under 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1401(3), or
- the student is a sibling of an eligible student with a disability who resides in the same home and attends the same school as the eligible student with a disability.

Estimated Savings to the State Reporting

To calculate the savings to the state, staff at the USBE used SGO reported scholarships, administrative, and marketing amounts compared with the average state cost of a student who is receiving special

education services:

- The SGO reported 334 students receiving scholarships.
- An estimated 30.33% of recipients, based on survey results provided by the SGO, attended public schools prior to being awarded a scholarship for the reporting year.
- This means that of the 334 scholarship recipients, an estimated 101 students previously attended public schools ($334 \times 0.3033 = 101$ students).
- Donations to the program result in a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, thus reducing the amount in the uniform school fund.
- There are many ways to determine the state cost for students in special education. Based on the Superintendent's report the average cost per student in the state of Utah was \$13,780, which included state, local and federal funding. Each student in special education generates two Weighted Pupil Units (WPU) which equates to \$8,988 per student. When considering all the state special education expenditures only and dividing by the number of students in special education the amount is \$5,493. Based on these numbers, it is estimated that the average state cost per student in Special Education falls within the range of \$5,493 and \$13,780. For the purposes of this report, we are using \$13,780 as this is audited financial data that is submitted in federal reporting.
- The average amount that was given out for scholarships was \$8,954.78.
- The administration and marketing amounts, including the amount for the USBE staff overseeing the program (\$66,580), when divided between the number of scholarship recipients, averaged \$1,374.74 per student.
- The total amount per student with scholarships, administration, including the amount for the USBE staff overseeing the program, and marketing was \$10,329.52 for the 2023-24 school year.
- Total average cost of the estimated 101 students that would have attended public schools: $\$13,780 \times 101 = \$1,391,780.00$.
- Total Spent for scholarships, administration, including the amount for the USBE staff overseeing the program, and marketing for the 334 recipients: $\$10,329.52 \times 334 = \$ 3,450,060.93$.
- Which represents an estimated net loss to the state of \$2,058,280.93 for 2023-2024.