

Utah Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

August 17, 2015

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Section 1: Introduction

The Utah State Office of Education (USOE) submits the following plan that has been developed to assure equitable access for all students to excellent teachers. This plan responds to Education Secretary Arne Duncan's July 7, 2014, letter to State Education Agencies (SEAs), as augmented with additional guidance published on November 10, 2014. Utah's plan complies with (1) the requirement in Section 1111(b)(8)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that each state's Title I, Part A plan include information on the specific steps that the SEA will take to ensure that students from low-income families, students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers, and the measures that the agency will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the agency with respect to such steps; and (2) the requirement in ESEA Section 1111(e)(2) that a state's plan be revised by the SEA if necessary. Given the importance of strong leadership, our plan also includes the specific steps that we will take to ensure that students from low-income families, students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities are not disproportionately attending schools led by inexperienced or unqualified principals.

This plan details our approach to achieving our objective of improving access to excellent educators for all students. Our approach was to examine data, not for the purpose of only finding reasons, or excuses, for inequities, but to determine root causes that could be addressed in proactive ways. This plan is based on analysis of data and stakeholder input based on a theory of action which states,

If a comprehensive and coherent plan for increasing excellence in every classroom is a collaborative effort of the Utah State Office of Education and Local Education Agencies

And if that plan addresses key areas of culture, leadership, teaching, and policy in Utah schools

Then teacher effectiveness will be enhanced so that all students will have equitable access to excellent teaching and learning resulting in higher levels of college- and career-readiness for all students.

This theory of action led to four key strategies, each with sub-strategies described in Section 4.

1. Teacher preparation and professional learning
2. Leadership enhancement
3. Attention to cultural factors
4. Local data analysis and goal setting

The plan also includes a timeline for implementation, metrics for evaluation, and a plan for monitoring and continued improvement under the guidance of a USOE leadership team continually informed by stakeholder input.

To create this plan, a team of leaders at the Utah State Office of Education, in collaboration with stakeholders, and led by the Director of Teaching and Learning, took the following steps:

1. Reviewed the requirements and began planning for data-review, root-cause analysis, and plan development in collaboration with stakeholders.
2. Reviewed data provided by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) through ED Facts and Utah's Educator Data System to identify equity gaps.
3. Created a one page data sheet to use in conversations with stakeholders regarding inexperience and underqualified teachers in Utah schools.
4. Convened a steering committee of representatives from the following departments at USOE: Administration, Teaching and Learning, Special Education, Federal Programs, Assessment and Accountability, Career, Technical, and Adult Education, Public Relations and Data and Statistics departments to oversee the process and provide recommendations.
5. Conducted meetings with stakeholder groups using the data sheet and a facilitated conversation regarding excellence.
 - a. Excellence Steering Committee
 - b. USOE Leadership Group
 - c. Teaching and Learning Staff
 - d. Curriculum Directors
 - i. Wasatch Front Curriculum Directors
 - ii. Northern Utah Curriculum Consortium (NUCC)
 - e. Utah Council of Education Deans (UCED)
 - f. Utah Superintendents

- g. Charter School Directors
 - h. Utah Consortium for Education Leadership (UCEL)
 - i. Utah Human Resource Directors
 - j. Utah Association of Secondary School Principals
6. Collated and analyzed input from various stakeholder groups regarding inequities and root causes.
 7. Collected metrics on current policies and initiatives to address educator excellence.
 8. Collected input on potential state initiatives and supports.
 9. Synthesized data collection and stakeholder input to define strategies and metrics.

Preliminary Studies of Data and Policy

To begin the process in an informed way, USOE convened an internal workgroup to analyze data submitted by ED and to analyze relevant and available data in Utah’s Longitudinal Data System and Utah’s Comprehensive Administration of Credentials for Teachers in Utah Schools (CACTUS) database. These systems contain student achievement and demographic data and teacher demographic, placement, experience, and qualifications data. Specifically, we considered:

- Existing state and federal programs impacting teacher recruitment, retention, development, and support.
- Legislation and policy supporting teacher professional learning.
- Current licensure standards and requirements.
- Utah’s Effective Teaching Standards and Educator Evaluation System, currently under pilot, but ready for full implementation in fall, 2015.
- Available and relevant data available in Utah’s Data Systems, including data on teacher experience and qualifications, and student achievement data.

Section 2: Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an integral part of any plan development, especially when action by stakeholders is desired as an outcome. For that reason, the USOE began conversations with stakeholders early in the plan development process. Stakeholders included not only school districts and charter schools, but also higher education, and policy makers. Initial input was received at various meetings (Appendix C) and additional input was received via email as various stakeholders reviewed the developing plan at two distinct points, one after the initial draft was prepared in early April, and again after revisions were made based on input in May. This stakeholder involvement will continue through implementation of the plan and will be

