

2013 Legislative Priorities of the Joint Legislative Committee
Utah School Boards Association/Utah School Superintendents Association/
Utah Association of School Business Officials
Adopted August 11, 2012

Two Highest Priorities

Growth Student enrollment growth needs to be fully funded, including all of the categories that are affected by growth including K-12 Program, Necessarily Existent Small Schools, Professional Staff costs, Special Education and Class Size Reduction. In addition, “below the line” items affected by growth include Optional Extended Day Kindergarten, Transportation, Flexible WPU, Enhancement for Students at Risk, Enhancement for Accelerated Students, K-3 Reading, Educator Salary Adjustment, Library Funding, School Nurses Matching Funds, and Board and Local Leeway Matching Funds.

WPU Increase The Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) has declined in value over the past few years as a result of legislative budget transfers, a marked decrease in the Flexible WPU allocation, and a lack of adequate funding for new student enrollment growth. Additionally, recent increases in the value of the WPU have not kept pace with costs of retirement, salaries and health benefits which continue to climb. In order to adequately staff, compensate and allocate teaching resources, our schools need the state to fully fund future retirement increases (estimated at 1.7% of the WPU for FY14) plus a significant increase in the WPU for FY14. The retirement and Social Security costs for all other state employees have been funded in recent years, but not so for public education employees.

We support a careful review of school funding formulas, such as suggested by Lt. Governor Bell, and we expect that some of our experts would be invited to serve on such a review. Such a review should include a comparison of the adequate funding of existing formulas (e.g. WPU value without legislative transfers, 85% transportation costs, flexible WPU for retirement, Capital Foundation, Necessarily Existent Small Schools [NESS], charter schools, etc.) with any proposed changes.

Other Priorities

Charter School Local Replacement Funding Charter school students deserve similar funding amounts as traditional school students but local property taxes, excised by local school boards of education belong to district schools, not to charter schools. We continue to support local replacement funding for charter schools at the state level where charter schools were organized, are regulated, and are held accountable. Funding for charter schools should be transparent and the portion now taken from local property taxes must be included on the county tax notice. We support a bill which would give local school boards of education the authority to evaluate and audit the local property tax monies now allocated to charter schools.

Non Partisan, Direct Elections State and local school boards must be directly elected by their constituents in nonpartisan elections. Moving school board elections to odd years to align with municipality elections might strengthen a community’s support for, and understanding of non partisan, local school board elections.

Continued Funding for Program Excellence We support programs in our schools that yield excellent results and lead toward greater achievement such as:

- Optional Extended Day Kindergarten
- Early Intervention Programs
- Utah’s Core Standards
- Statewide Online Public Education Program
- Ample, quality Concurrent Enrollment Courses
- Targeted Professional Development Options funded with state dollars
- Science, Technology and Math (STEM) funding for grades 4-6, math and science
- Support Arts Education

Specific Issues to Monitor

1. Retirement eligibility changes
2. Legislation on tax cap .0025
3. Amendments to evaluation or grading bills