



Education

Increase performance, don't lower expectations

Legislative statute sets a goal that only 60% of 3rd grade students need to be reading at grade level. This leaves almost half of our kids behind by 3rd grade. Students still have nine years of school before they can graduate and most, by then, will not be at the appropriate literacy level. Even worse, we have yet to make it to the 60% mark in the first place.*

Lowering our expectations does no one any good. What [if we took this approach in sports? We'd never see a world record again!](#) We must increase performance. [This also requires we](#) equalize opportunities between higher and lower socio-economic areas. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the underlying inequities between schools of higher economic resources and lower. Homes without internet access were at a distinct disadvantage as school districts redirected their classroom learning into virtual conferences. In today's environment, the inequities of resources are dramatically exacerbated. Students who were prone to skill gaps before will fall deeper in the hole, leaving future years of instruction potentially unmanageable.

Even those who received printed packets could not be readily tracked or assisted by their teachers and school resources. This is supported by the need for Granite school district to place their mobile WiFi stations, which took weeks to implement, primarily in our district and on the west side of Salt Lake County.**

*<https://www.deseret.com/2018/3/5/20641067/utah-house-committee-approves-bill-to-raise-bar-for-early-elementary-school-reading>

**<https://www.facebook.com/GEAUtah/photos/pcb.3503592896322745/3503589192989782/?type=3&theater>

**<https://www.facebook.com/GEAUtah/photos/pcb.3503592896322745/3503590529656315/?type=3&theater>

Invest most intensely on the earliest years of education for long-term success

As a Center Director for Sylvan Learning Center, every student I saw receiving supplemental education had skill gaps that started in kindergarten. The first year of school is not only when kids learn foundational skills, but learn to LOVE learning itself. Our educators know that helping a child who is behind in reading in kindergarten or 1st grade only requires an additional 15 minutes of individual help per day. This goes to 50-60 minutes of individualized attention per day for 4th-5th graders. It's much more cost-effective and results-driven to invest in



kindergarten than try to mitigate the problems of a middle school student. By middle-school, we often see significant behavior problems in addition to the skill gaps. Let's invest our time and resources wisely.

Maintain priority funding for our public school system

My very first impression of Utah politics was made in 1995-1996 when we added the additional earmark for education on the ballot. It was immediately apparent Utahns did not trust the Legislature to prioritize education. Utahns consistently support education, air quality and water as their top three issues. To preserve our best interests, we need to evaluate what is the most consistent and recession-proof stream of funding for education. A percentage of yearly funding should be placed in a rainy day fund specific to public education to maintain consistency even when the economy or disaster has the potential for negative impacts. Allowing our education to suffer when the economy recedes will only amplify the damage to our overall economic health.

We need to tighten what can be claimed in the education earmark. We have relatively loose definitions as to what is being qualified as an education expense and can be diverted from our public schools. This includes requiring the same regulatory process and accountability from charter schools. Publically funded equals publicly accountable and they should be held to the same standards.

We must not reallocate funding from a revenue source, such as our school lunch money from DABC, back to the general education fund without increasing the general education fund to match. This is similar to a double-dip into the education budget.

Attract and retain the best and brightest in the field

I have yet to meet a teacher who went into the profession for the money. I believe the most viable approach to attracting the best and brightest for one of the most important professions in our society is a three-pronged approach.

First, treat teachers as professionals, demonstrating the same level of respect that we show other professionals. Pay them, listen to them, and revere them the way we do doctors, nurses, first responders, architects, lawyers, and other professionals.

Second, support them with tools they need to teach. This includes support personnel, productive classroom sizes, supplies, and time to prepare for the incessantly changing and dynamic needs of students.

Third, give teachers a reason to forsake the money and status of other professions. Design a structure where committed and talented educators can be relieved of student loans based on their length of service which will thereby incentivize stability in our educational workforce.