



OFFICE OF THE
STATE AUDITOR

News Release

For Immediate Release

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**Office of the State Auditor Releases
Public Education Performance Dashboards**

Compares the Relationship Between Student Performance and Public Education Spending

Salt Lake City, UTAH –

The Office of the State Auditor (Office) today announced the release of additional public education dashboards comparing spending with student performance. These new dashboards visually display student proficiency versus average student spending on a district-by-district basis. These dashboards integrate data that is collected and published by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE). These dashboards are designed to make it easier for the public to analyze K-12 spending versus student proficiency and growth in proficiency.

According to the USBE, on average, students achieved the following proficiency on statewide tests for school year 2018-19:

- Mathematics: 46%
- Language Arts: 45%
- Science: 48%

This is likely lower than many Utahns would expect. Unfortunately, the dashboards show that there does not appear to be any correlation between spending levels and student proficiency.

State Auditor John Dougall said, “While many taxpayers expect more money would result in greater student achievement, that does not appear to be Utah’s current reality. There does not appear to be any clear connection between per-student spending and student success on statewide tests. Utah’s System of Public Education should identify better ways to align its financial resources to improve student learning and achievement.”

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal offers some national perspective on education funding, reporting, “But between 2012 and 2017—the last year of available Census Bureau data—average per-pupil education spending increased by 15%. Spending has been growing at an even faster clip over the last couple of years as government revenue has recovered from the recession.

“States that are spending more haven’t shown improvement. In California annual K-12 spending has increased by more than half since 2013 to \$102 billion. Yet student test scores have been flat since 2013. It’s a similar story in New York, Illinois and New Jersey where Democrats have raised taxes for schools.” (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/americas-schools-flunk-11572475768>)

These dashboards are part of a larger effort by the Office to analyze education spending and spending effectiveness. Project KIDS is an innovative performance audit that is currently integrating key data across Utah’s system of public education. Project KIDS is intended to help the public, policymakers, and public education professionals better understand how money reaches the classroom and its impact on student learning.

These public education dashboards may be found at:
https://auditor.utah.gov/audit_reports/public-education/

About the Office of the State Auditor

The Office of the State Auditor provides Utah taxpayers and government officials with an independent assessment of financial operation, statutory compliance, and performance management for state and local government.

Specific activities of the Office include performing financial audits, conducting Federal funds compliance audits, providing local government oversight, conducting agency and program performance audits, performing fraud and compliance audits, and operating the State Auditor Hotline for citizens to report suspected financial issues or improprieties. These capabilities strengthen Utah State Government and help taxpayers have confidence in the integrity of Utah’s government agencies.

The State Auditor is a Constitutional Officer of the State of Utah, elected directly by the state’s citizens every four years. The role of the State Auditor is authorized in Article VII, Section 15 of the Utah Constitution. For more information, see auditor.utah.gov.

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