

The Center for the School of the Future Receives \$1.5M from Utah State Legislature

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A USU student participates in her practicum at Adams Elementary in Logan, Utah.

The Center for the School of the Future (CSF), a state-funded, innovation-driven education center housed within the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, received \$1.5 million in one-time funding to build the processes and metrics that will guide LEAs (local education agencies) in determining the Utah teachers who will receive substantial salary supplements. The funding came from the recent 2024 legislative session, in which CSF was specifically named in Senate Bill 173, sponsored by Senator Lincoln Fillmore. The bill, which passed both legislative bodies by an overwhelming majority, will increase the salaries of Utah's top performing teachers creating a salary supplement structure that could result in salaries of \$100K per year.

"High-performing teachers are at the most risk of leaving because they have a lot of options," explains Parker Fawson, executive director of the Center for the School of the Future. "They might say, 'I love teaching, but I can't afford to teach. I'm going to find a high-paying job somewhere else to meet my needs.' This was an effort by the Utah legislature to keep the best teachers in the profession. The legislature wants a \$100,000 salary for teachers who are really hitting home runs with their students' learning."

The proposed salary supplements are between \$10K and \$20K—depending on the level of need of the school in which the recipient teacher works. "A top performing

teacher in a school on the east side of Salt Lake could get up to \$10,000," explains Fawson. "If an awarded teacher is in a high-poverty school, the amount is doubled."

CSF will have an administrative responsibility in applying the new policy. "Our role is to build the processes that will be used to guide the LEAs," says Fawson. "They will submit their plans to us for approval and start collecting data on the teachers they want to move forward on the compensation enhancement. CSF will review the list and make sure it conforms with their approved processes, and then we will forward that information to the USBE (Utah State Board of Education). The Board will distribute the funding."



Executive Director Parker Fawson and Senior Fellow Reid Newey, both in the Center for the School of the Future.

The CSF also received \$200K from the state legislature in ongoing funding for their Teacher Academy Schools (TAS). Normally, teacher candidates complete required practicum experiences in K-6 classrooms as part of the teacher education program prior to their final student teaching semester. The TAS program provides students an additional 100+ hours of experience over a three-semester period, and the opportunity for a paid apprenticeship experience, all prior to student teaching.

"We want students fully embedded in a school for those two years," says Fawson. "They are taking academic courses in the context of the school and then immediately applying what they have learned in classrooms. This is a robust clinically based program. The teachers in the schools are mentoring the practicum students in profound ways, so we're infusing their high level of expertise into the learning of future teachers."

In promoting Teacher Academy Schools in districts throughout Utah, CSF is addressing two major problems that afflict K-12 education in the state. The first is the decline in university enrollment and in education degrees in general, which disrupts the flow of new teachers being hired into school districts. The second is the complexity of the modern K-12 classroom and the incessant pressure a teacher faces in managing a classroom, which may drive

a teacher away from the profession long before retirement age.

In 2017, CSF worked closely with Reid Newey, senior fellow at the Center for the School of the Future and then longtime superintendent of Davis School District, while the district custom-designed two new elementary schools—Sunburst and South Clearfield—to better facilitate pre-service learning and enhance K-6 student learning opportunities. The schools opened in 2020, and Sunburst provides space for university classes to be taught on site. “We built some space into the building for that purpose,” explains Newey. “Teacher candidates learn a concept, go out and observe it real-time, then come back and debrief with their classmates.”

It isn’t necessary or even feasible for school districts to create adult learning spaces in a Teacher Academy School. The priority is to get the districts on board with the extended practicum experience so they can enhance what teacher candidates learn in the K-6 classroom. More quality mentored time in the classroom leads to better preparation and increased confidence for new teachers. “We want that really tight experience so when new teachers get their first jobs, they already have two years of teaching experience. They’re not taking a year or two to figure it out,” says Fawson.

University students participating in a Teacher Academy School practicum come away with an advantage over their peers. “We have four students from USU who participated in the Davis program,” says Fawson. “They were snatched up quickly upon graduation. The principals say these are the best teachers they have ever hired because they are hitting the ground running. The new teachers never come back and say, ‘I don’t know how to manage a classroom.’ They know how because they have watched and done it for two years.”

Davis School District was the first district in the state to participate in the TAS program. Today, six districts are examining ways to incorporate a Teacher Academy School in their area. Logan City School District began using Adams Elementary, a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon School for excellence in literacy learning, as its Teacher Academy School in Fall 2023.

“Four students are currently embedded in Adams Elementary,” says Fawson. “It has been a good experience for the students and the school. Logan City School District has said it wants 15 students next year; they want this to be their elementary teacher pathway. Eventually, they may say, ‘If you want to teach in Logan City, you need to go through this embedded program.’”

Newey encourages education majors around the state to participate in a Teacher Academy School to fulfill their practicum requirements. “This is the best way to educate a teacher,” he says. “It is an optimal experience. Students are actually doing the work of teaching. It makes a world of difference.”

To learn more about Teacher Academy Schools, visit [Center for the School of the Future](#).