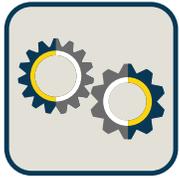


SPOTLIGHT ON:

UTAH TITLE IV-A IMPLEMENTATION



Building Capacity for Standards and Content Integration With State Set-Aside Funds

OVERVIEW

Using Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A) state set-aside funds, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) has prioritized helping educators across the state develop and provide high-quality instruction to students through effectively applying state learning standards and integrating content across subject areas. To meet these goals, the USBE Title IV-A State coordinator (SC) and content area specialists employed two strategies. First, they created a Standards Implementation Institute (SII), which included a customizable professional development event and an accompanying lesson planning template. Second, the USBE worked with PreK through grade 6 teachers to promote more intentional instructional design through content integration via additional training events. This resource summarizes Utah's innovative work.

Laying the Groundwork

Utah's SII and content integration efforts are the culmination of more than two years of planning. To accomplish the initial work of operationalizing what high-quality instruction could look like, Utah developed two frameworks that describe the state's goals for the Utah school system (see Figure 1). First, the Personalized Competency Based Learning (PCBL) Framework connects the USBE [Strategic Plan](#) to teachers' and students' day-to-day work toward achieving the desired learning outcomes outlined in Utah's Core Standards. Second, the High Quality Instructional (HQI) Cycle for LEAs (local education agencies) is an iterative process for planning and delivering instruction in ways that help each student demonstrate competency aligned with the Utah Portrait of a Graduate (see Utah's Vision for All Students). Combined, these two frameworks laid the foundation for the work accomplished for both the SII and the content integration strategies.

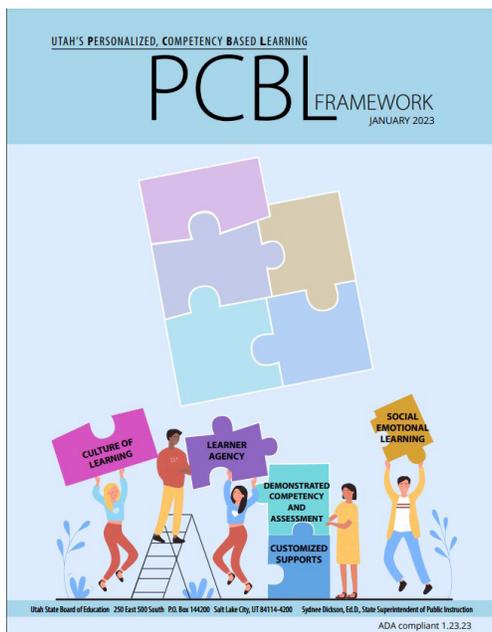
Utah's Vision for All Students

[Utah's Portrait of a Graduate](#) articulates characteristics that the USBE and stakeholders hope Utah students develop as they go through the preK-12 system. Specifically, Utah aims to cultivate **M.A.P.:** **Mastery** ("the ability to demonstrate depth of knowledge and skill proficiency"), **Autonomy** ("the self-confidence and motivation to think and act independently"), and **Purpose** (which "guides life decisions, influences behavior, shapes goals, offers a sense of direction, and creates meaning").



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Figure 1: Two Frameworks Used by the Utah State Board of Education: Personalized, Competency Based Learning (PCBL) Framework and High Quality Instructional Cycle (HQI)



Jodi Parker, Utah Title IV-A SC, says about the two frameworks, “We know that PCBL works and that improving the culture of learning works and that when students learn authentically, it works; so, over time, if we are using these strategies in our PreK through sixth-grade classrooms, the outcomes in secondary would improve. That’s what we know.” Utah used these principles to build a culture where personalized, high-quality, integrated learning is the norm. UBSE intentionally aligned SII and content integration supports with these two frameworks, and the efforts are described in greater detail below.

UTAH’S STANDARDS IMPLEMENTATION INSTITUTE (SII)

The planning phase for SII spanned two years (from 2020 to 2022). During that time, Utah reimagined its approach to professional development, with the goal of building teachers’ individual capacity to create standards-based lessons. Ultimately, USBE specialists and teacher leaders offered a variety of professional learning opportunities to educators across the state starting in the summer of 2022. At the events, USBE facilitators provided lesson planning templates and modeled ways teachers could

“ You don’t have to set aside a specific hour for literacy; there is literacy [in] each discipline. You can read other disciplinary content and still achieve literacy goals; just like you can do math in nutrition and math in science. It is all connected. ”

—Jodi Parker, Utah SC

independently develop high-quality, asset-based instruction on a specific state standard. In addition to the two frameworks illustrated above, Utah also incorporated additional best practices such as universal design for learning (UDL) principles. The UDL training was targeted at secondary educators in both middle and high school settings, and focused on how to implement standards in individual subjects. After receiving positive feedback from the field, state staff took the show on the road and provided customizable training to meet LEAs’ specific needs around both standards implementation and topical needs.

PROMOTING CONTENT INTEGRATION

To provide a complementary approach to the SII for the early grades, USBE decided to focus on standards implementation through content integration. USBE content area expert JoAnna Sorensen noted that while content connections sometimes happen organically in an elementary classroom, Utah wanted to promote more intentional lesson design by teachers and other school staff. To guide this work, Utah formed an advisory committee, comprising eight LEA-based content specialists, eight teachers (self-nominated, via a survey), two USBE representatives, and a coordinator. These staff members consulted with their schools to identify needs and secure buy-in for these efforts.

As a first step, this team worked to reach consensus on a definition for content integration. Then team members developed resources to help educators with content integration (see Utah's Definition of Content Integration). Resources developed included a one-pager entitled [Why Content Integration?](#), which explains how integration is defined and



Utah's Definition of Content Integration

[Content integration](#) is “an approach to teaching in which learning experiences are intentionally designed for students to construct and demonstrate understanding in more than one discipline which honors the nature of the contents and builds upon the natural connections.”

how integration supports Utah's vision for student outcomes (see page 1: [Utah's Vision for All Students](#)). Additionally, state-level content area specialists created crosswalks between content area state standards to demonstrate areas of overlap between Utah's core standards. Each of the supports not only shared what educators should do but also gave them structures and a road map to carry out content integration tasks. As part of the rollout, Utah promoted the key message that this work was intended to make educators' jobs easier, not harder. Utah SC Jodi Parker framed their efforts in this way: “We're not adding one more thing. We are giving tools to really drive forward the goals that we already have established for education.” Future plans include developing observation rubrics for administrative staff to use to support educators in honing their content integration skills and a Web portal housing related resources and highlighting examples of successful content integration.

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PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TAKEAWAYS

When asked what really contributed to the success of these efforts, Utah shared a few practical tips, summarized below. Other states may want to replicate these practices.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE

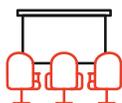
Prioritize stakeholder engagement.



Bringing in the perspectives of educators and decision makers early in the process contributed to the success of the initiative. End-user and specialists helped develop the tools and resources used to support both standards implementation and content integration, ensuring that the process was on the right track. Stakeholders included teachers, LEA leadership and other office staff, curriculum directors, and school-level staff.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Train personnel statewide on overall principles and vision.



LEA staff trained on UDL helped build out SII and content integration professional development activities and resources. Expanding staff understanding of what UDL looks like and how it addresses the Strategic Plan and Portrait of a Graduate took the burden off of state staff to do all the work. Utah SC Jodi Parker noted, “As a specialist at the state office, I’m one person, but if I can train 10 [educators] and then they go into their areas, I don’t have to be in 10 places... Instead of having one expert, we have 10 experts.”

SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Identify state leaders and specialists who can serve as champions.



In this case, Utah’s Director of Teaching and Learning helped inspire and champion this initiative. For states lacking similar leadership, Utah’s SC recommended making connections with content specialists who know how Title IV-A works to support academic programs that are not traditionally well funded. These individuals can bring awareness and action around using Title IV-A resources to reinforce learning standards implementation and content integration.

For more information, see the [USBE Strategic Plan Web page](#). Of note, the USBE leveraged research highlighting how content integration uses real-world, relevant examples to engage students and foster Portrait of a Graduate characteristics to generate buy-in among educators. In addition, USBE’s [Strategic Plan](#) describes what adults are doing to facilitate helping students become this “portrait.” The plan has four goals: (1) early learning, (2) effective educators and leaders, (3) safe and healthy schools, and (4) personalized teaching and learning. USBE also uses [indicators aligned to each goal](#) to track progress on each of the four goals.



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