

A SUTHERLAND INSTITUTE
POLICY PUBLICATION

Boosting Parent Engagement in Public Schools by Strengthening Parent Access



SUTHERLAND
INSTITUTE
A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM



Founded in 1995, Sutherland Institute is a nonpartisan policy and educational institution – a think tank. Our mission is to advance principled public policy that promotes the values of faith, family and free markets. Our research informs the public and policymakers alike – true to the belief that this and every generation must recommit to the principles that make us free. Sutherland Institute does not seek or accept government funding.

A Sutherland Institute Policy Publication

Boosting Parent Engagement in Public Schools by Strengthening Parent Access

Written by Christine Cooke Fairbanks

August 2024

Layout and design by Spencer Williams
© 2024 Sutherland Institute All Rights Reserved

Table of Contents

4	Introduction
5	The history of expanding parent access in America's public schools
7	State policies expanding parent access to curriculum
8	Utah's parent access policy landscape
10	Evaluating local parent access policies in Utah
13	The need for parent access reform
15	Parent access policy recommendations for Utah
17	Conclusion
18	Endnotes

Introduction

Parent engagement in a student’s learning is a powerful way to improve student outcomes.¹ This means that a top priority of education policy overseeing K-12 public schools in Utah ought to be increasing parent engagement.

For parents to be engaged constructively in student learning, they must first be informed about what their student is learning. In the absence of reasonable parent access to information about what a student is learning during the year and each week, as well as to the instructional materials teachers are using in the classroom, a parent is condemned to ask one of the most ineffective and *unengaging* questions ever devised for a student: “What did you learn in school today?”

On the other hand, when parents have easy access to the list of instructional topics for a given year and subject, the specific topics that their student will be learning that week, and the instructional materials the teacher will use to teach those topics, they are empowered to act on their natural desire to help their child learn in meaningful and effective ways. State and local education policy can achieve this outcome by: (1) ensuring district parent access

policies are understandable and accessible to parents, (2) maintaining practical and easy parent access to district curriculum information, and (3) rewarding public educators who proactively ensure parent access to curriculum information.

This report is intended to help policymakers improve parent access policies by:

1. Increasing understanding of the historical evolution of parent access policies in America.
2. Documenting state parent access policies across the country.
3. Analyzing Utah’s state parent access policy landscape.
4. Evaluating local school district parent access policies.
5. Highlighting the benefits of strong parent access policies for educators, students and parents.
6. Offering recommendations for improving parent access policies in Utah.

The history of expanding parent access in America’s public schools

Our country’s history shows a trend toward increasing transparency in public schools. In 1974, the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendments was passed (with updates as recent as 2002), which among other things secured the right for parents to review curriculum at schools that received federal dollars.² Under this provision, schools are required to comply with “requests to review” as they come but not required to *proactively* offer a look into curriculum. The federal law also allows parents to opt kids out of student surveys that ask sensitive questions.

Similar in function to the federal Freedom of Information Act – which does not apply to schools – all states have some law aimed at requesting public records for state and local entities, which can apply to school districts but not student education records.³ In 1991, Utah passed its Government Records Access and Management Act.⁴

Another key point in the trajectory toward transparency of performance in schools was the No Child Left Behind Act, which was passed by Congress in 2001.⁵ Its goal was to make schools accountable for student performance, especially students in underprivileged groups. How did it intend to accomplish this audacious goal of accountability? A big part of it was through transparency to the public. This was to be accomplished through reforms of state standards, assessments, accountability systems, and reported yearly progress. While many controversial elements

of the NCLB policy have been discarded, its biggest triumph was a new policy standard of publicly reporting school performance metrics.

In the mid-2000s to 2010s, many states adopted accountability reforms like school grading intended to communicate to the public how well individual schools were doing. Utah’s Legislature passed its own A-F school grading law in 2011.⁶ Later, Utah’s school letter grades were dropped from the state’s accountability system, in 2023, in favor of a dashboard with several diagnostic metrics.⁷ While dashboards offer nuance, dropping the letter grades removed clarity that helped parents quickly assess how a school performs, changing the degree of simplicity to the public.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, forcing students to go home for school – and allowing parents a better view of what kids were learning. Combined with growing cultural battles over race, and gender theories in schools catching national attention during this time, the political environment often pitted parents against the public education system and its teachers. An already existing parents’ rights movement grew exponentially thereafter, and part of it was a push for increased parent access to information on curriculum.

Having better information about curriculum and learning materials in school has been the next frontier in seeking transparency, one in which states have already taken steps, including Utah.

Congress even acted in response to the growing push for parents' education rights. In 2023, the Parents Bill of Rights Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives.⁸ Among other things, the bill would require posting on a publicly available website information about curriculum, books in schools, spending and more. Though passage in the House was considered a win, there was little expectation that it would pass the Senate. States have passed versions of a parents' bill of rights, some with differing features but many aimed at these objectives.

Opponents of efforts to make curriculum more accessible to parents argue these policies overburden, micromanage and censor teachers. Others say teachers are already making curriculum information accessible.

Notwithstanding, Sutherland Institute believes there is space for reforms that increase parent access to information about course curriculum in Utah. We believe it's possible for reform to encourage district-level improvements, protect teacher professionalism, and promote positive parent involvement in public education.



State policies expanding parent access to curriculum

Many states have public policy to provide parents access to curriculum.⁹ As of summer 2024, at least 17 states have passed some form of statewide curriculum transparency legislation: Alabama,¹⁰ Alaska,¹¹ Arizona,¹² California,¹³ Colorado,¹⁴ Connecticut,¹⁵ Florida,¹⁶ Idaho,¹⁷ Kentucky,¹⁸ Louisiana,¹⁹ Michigan,²⁰ Minnesota,²¹ Pennsylvania,²² Tennessee,²³ Texas,²⁴ Utah²⁵ and West Virginia.²⁶

However, the nature and scope of state laws vary. Many offer little more than what federal law requires, which is essentially a parent’s right to review curriculum. While such provisions appear to offer access to information, logistically they can be ineffective, as one scholar has pointed out,²⁷ and fall short of the expectations we have in other areas

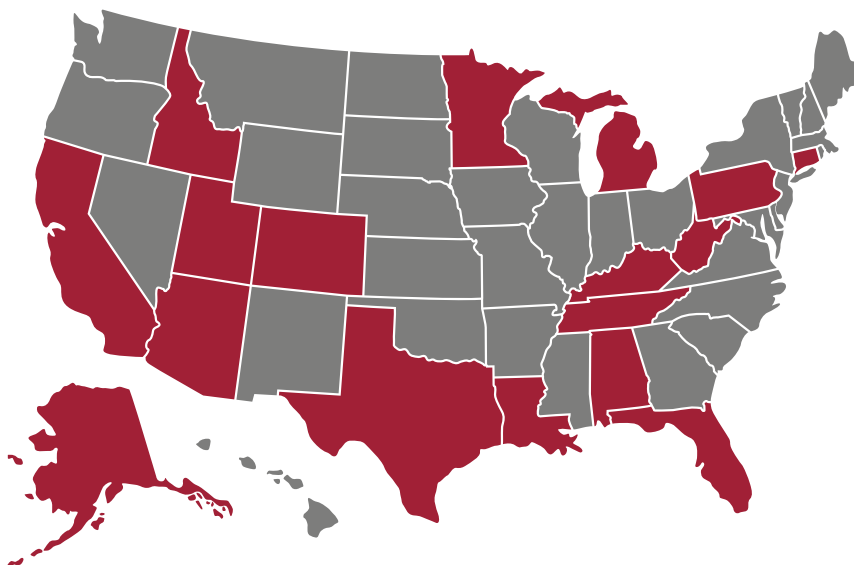
of our life – that is, proactive, immediate, real-time information.

Some public policies have not been legislation. For example, last year Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed an executive order that, among many outcomes, pushed a review of curriculum transparency in the state and found that there was limited access to information and to the selection process.²⁸ In 2022, the Missouri attorney general announced an initiative calling for parents to send examples of things that have gone wrong in the classroom.²⁹

At the local level, many districts or individual teachers already put information about curriculum and instructional materials online voluntarily.

States with public policy providing parent access to curriculum

- Alabama
- Alaska
- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Florida
- Idaho
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Pennsylvania
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- West Virginia



Utah's parent access policy landscape

Utah's Legislature has taken important steps in recent years to make public schools more transparent for parents.³⁰

In 2023 Utah passed a law that requires school districts to create an instructional materials approval policy that outlines an open process, which includes having educators and parents of students enrolled in the local education agency (LEA) review and recommend instructional materials for board approval.³¹ Among other things, the materials have to be made public online, and two public meetings have to be held so the public may express their opinions. It requires districts to create a supplemental materials policy for educators. It also requires that any provider of digital materials give districts notice of any "material changes" to online or digital resources.

A bill passed in 2021 requiring that curriculum used by the school district be made "readily accessible and available for a parent to review."³² LEAs must also annually notify parents how they can access the materials, including posting the access information on their website. Basically, Utah has put the burden on districts to ensure parent access to curriculum and create policies for curriculum approval processes.

Utah also passed legislation regarding library materials and has added policies for "sensitive materials" as part of the state's overall effort to be more transparent in its public schools. As of 2023, LEAs are required to have a library policy that

governs their selection of library materials and to provide an online platform so parents can view what their child is checking out (and what they have previously checked out). Depending on the size of their district or charter school, this must be done by August 2024 or August 2026.³³

Legislators have recently developed an updated approach to handling "sensitive material" in school, a controversial topic dealing with material considered to be pornographic or indecent. In 2024, the state passed a bill aimed at helping school districts better understand how to evaluate and remove sensitive material from the school setting.³⁴

While library and sensitive materials law involves important policy discussions and has rightly garnered media attention, it is not the specific focus of this policy report or our recommendations for reform. Instead, the policy reforms discussed in this report focus on increasing parent access to information about instructional topics or materials used specially at the classroom level for particular courses.

There have been two recent curriculum transparency bills that failed to pass the Utah Legislature in 2022 and 2023. The first bill in 2022 would have created a requirement directed specifically at teachers to create a syllabus of the curriculum used for that course.³⁵ The next year, a version of the bill required LEAs to create a policy "regarding course content that generally promotes transparency to parents and students," including

how to give parents notice and whether it ought to be accomplished through a syllabus.³⁶ This version sought to make the specifics of increasing access – like a syllabus – optional.

Having access to a syllabus prior to the school year has been seen as a gold standard among advocates for parent access policies, though without widespread success. Opponents argue parents have enough access to information about classroom learning materials, saying these policies increase distrust and increase burden on a profession already struggling with morale.³⁷ An earlier bill aimed at LEAs' process for adopting instructional materials also failed to pass in 2022.³⁸

The Utah State Board of Education stepped in that same year to accomplish something similar to the intent of that bill, changing a rule to require making the selection of certain learning materials and related complaints “transparent and publicly available” and to require parent participation in the selection committee.³⁹ The state board is also charged with creating academic standards, which are available publicly and outline what must be

taught in schools.⁴⁰ Further, to aid districts in selecting appropriate curriculum, it also hosts a database of curricula that the board has determined meet states law and standards.⁴¹ According to legislation passed in 2023, there is now a Parent Liaison and Engagement Education Specialist who works directly with inquiring parents and reports directly to the state board.^{42 43} This office helps parents navigate and access the public education system better.

This Utah legislative history and statutory framework shows that most of the transparency burden falls on LEAs. How well they meet the requirements found in existing statutes on parent access or transparency of learning materials is a question deserving of analysis and one that can illuminate areas for improvement.

Building on the work already done by policymakers, there is opportunity to improve parent access to curriculum, especially for specific classrooms in Utah.

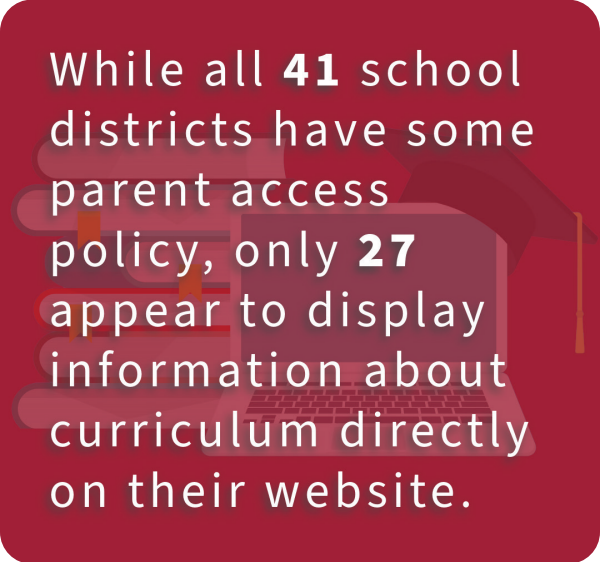
Evaluating local parent access policies in Utah

To better understand how effectively districts are making curriculum information accessible to parents, Sutherland Institute reviewed Utah's 41 school districts, using a rubric that reflects what we consider a robust threshold for parent access implementation by districts.

Rubric metrics included whether district websites had any type of district policy posted regarding parent access to learning materials or parent participation in determining what's available to kids; whether the website included information on approved instructional materials; whether the homepage included links to the most common learning management or library platforms; and to what degree any of this information could be found easily by a parent trying to access it for more understanding and engagement. (See chart on next page.)

The review of the 41 school districts reveals a patchwork, with varying degrees of parent access policy implementation at the district level. The good news is, according to our research, all districts have some sort of policy dealing with parent participation in approval or parent access to instructional materials, library materials, or sensitive materials. However, the details matter greatly.

Nearly all district policies outline what is required by the *district* rather than teachers. Only five districts have a policy that directs classroom



While all **41** school districts have some parent access policy, only **27** appear to display information about curriculum directly on their website.

teachers to take specific actions to make their learning materials more accessible. This reflects the state's legitimate concern about overburdening teachers.

In trying to assess how easily someone, particularly a busy parent, could find district policies on district websites, we determined that most were easily accessible ("easily accessible" by our metric means three or fewer clicks away from the homepage). However, nine of the policies were not easily accessible, meaning they were buried or not easy to find on the district website for other reasons.

Creating an updated policy and making it easily accessible helps the public and parents with children enrolled in the district know what parents can expect, what their rights are, and how to get involved in their child's education.

Aside from posting district policy online, there is room for improvement in posting information about the approved instructional materials on district websites.

State law says districts must make curriculum used by the school district “readily accessible and available for a parent to review,” along with

giving instructions annually on how to access this information. Obviously, there could be different ways to accomplish this, and it does not require posting all approved curriculum on a website. However, we view the state’s language as a minimum and believe that best practice would include posting information about the approved

DISTRICT	Does the district have an instructional materials, library and/or sensitive materials policy listed online?	Are these district policies easily accessible?	Does district policy require educators to make classroom curriculum accessible to parents?	Does the district have a page with curriculum displayed on the district website?	Is the page with curriculum information easily accessible?	Is the curriculum displayed by grade and/or subject manner?	Is the curriculum page working well for users without broken links or other errors?	Is a link to Canvas found directly on the district homepage?
Alpine	X	X	X					X
Beaver	X	X						
Box Elder	X			X	X	X	X	X
Cache	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Canyons	X	X		X		X	X	
Carbon	X							
Daggett	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Davis	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Duchesne	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Emery	X							X
Garfield	X	X						
Grand	X	X						X
Granite	X	X		X		X	X	X
Iron	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Jordan	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Juab	X			X	X	X	X	X
Kane	X	X		X	X			X
Logan City	X	X		X		X	X	X
Millard	X	X						X
Morgan	X	X						X
Murray	X		X	X		X	X	X
Nebo	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
North Sanpete	X	X		X	X	X	X	
North Summit	X	X						
Ogden City	X		X	X	X	X		
Park City	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Piute	X							X
Provo	X	X		X	X	X		
Rich	X	X						X
Salt Lake	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
San Juan	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Sevier	X	X		X	X		X	
South Sanpete	X	X						X
South Summit	X	X		X	X			
Tintic	X	X						
Tooele	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Uintah	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Wasatch	X			X	X	X		X
Washington	X	X		X	X	X		X
Wayne	X	X						X
Weber	X	X		X		X		
TOTALS	41	32	5	27	21	24	20	25

instructional materials on district websites (or posting the actual materials).

To this end, we reviewed district websites for whether information about approved instructional materials were posted for parents to access and whether they were easily accessible and well organized.

We found that 27 districts display information about curriculum on their websites. Only 21 have curriculum information displayed on a page that is easily accessible on the website (considered “easily accessible” if it is three clicks or fewer from the homepage). The other six districts that do offer curriculum information on their websites do not have it posted in a place that is easily accessible to inquiring parents or members of the public. This means there are 14 districts that do not appear to have any information (lists, outlines, links, online textbooks) about their approved curriculum on their website for parents to see.

Of the 27 districts that do post information about district curriculum, 21 have broken webpages or links, and 17 of them do not have information that is well organized (well organized by our metrics means organized by grade and/or subject).

Furthermore, Utah has a statewide agreement with Canvas, a learning management system that offers teachers an online tool to share course calendars, materials, assignments and assessments with

students and parents. According to one source, by 2018 more than 90% of districts already used Canvas.⁴⁴

As of summer 2024, there are 25 districts that have a link to Canvas on their homepage, which is great news for parents seeking to use it when teachers are employing it for their courses. However, that means there are 16 districts that do not have a link to it on their homepage. According to some parents, Canvas is used differently by different teachers. All of this demonstrates that while Canvas is a tool with incredible potential, the variability and inconsistency in use by districts and teachers adds uncertainty to relying solely on Canvas to offer classroom transparency to parents.

In short, if parents are depending on their local school district where their child is enrolled to offer information on parent access policies or parent access to instructional materials, there is significant work to be done.

Improvements at the district level would likely require additional time, money (staff), and prioritization on the part of district leadership, which is something policymakers should take into consideration when legislating. Passing laws is a crucial first step, and Utah has done a commendable job of that in pushing districts to do more. Still, it’s clear there is space to give additional support to districts in doing that work on the ground.

The need for parent access reform

After all the headway Utah has made in making information available to parents about what their child may learn, why do we still need reform? There are several important reasons.

Meeting voter demand for more curriculum transparency

According to a 2024 Sutherland Institute survey conducted by Y² Analytics, a clear majority of likely Utah voters support creating additional curriculum transparency policies in the state, including majority support for requiring transparency from schools and districts (77%) and requiring teachers to offer lesson plans (63%).⁴⁵ The policy with highest support based on the survey options is *rewarding* teachers for sharing their lesson plan, at 79%.⁴⁶ Clearly an appetite exists in Utah for more curriculum transparency, but there is most support for rewarding teachers who voluntarily choose to be transparent rather than mandating it.

Overcoming COVID-19 pandemic learning challenges

Students today are trying to overcome pandemic learning loss, a lingering deficit that has widened since the pandemic for certain groups.⁴⁷ Chronic absenteeism is on the rise, including in Utah, where it jumped from 13% of all students considered chronically absent in 2018 to 27% in 2022.⁴⁸ In 2023, it dropped to 25.2%, but it is still concerningly high.⁴⁹ Perhaps increased parent access to curriculum could help students and

parents understand how to help students catch up if they are falling behind academically or after periods of absence.

Addressing dissatisfaction with public schools

Recent polling data shows that Americans on both sides of the political spectrum express concern about bias in curriculum, though for distinct reasons and with different worries.⁵⁰ While one national study suggests there are fewer incidents of “indoctrination” than people perceive, letting this feeling fester threatens to undermine public schools in the long term.⁵¹ A Gallup poll shows that satisfaction with public schools in the last nearly 20 years has plummeted, dropping from 53% (2004) to 36% (2023).⁵² The top reason reported in the poll for why parents feel this way is “poor/outdated curriculum.” It’s possible that part of the decreased satisfaction may stem from concern about bias in curriculum, a sentiment often cited as the reason for making curriculum more available to parents.

Encouraging parent involvement in education

Robust access to information about curriculum has potential to bolster the parent-teacher partnership.⁵³ Parents have a fundamental right to guide their children’s education, even when they enroll their children in public schools, delegating the delivery of content to professional educators in a classroom setting.⁵⁴ Utah Code says the parent is

the “primary person responsible for the education of the student.”⁵⁵ But a parent’s role in the public school setting is that of partnership, or involvement in the learning process, not the power to determine what the educator teaches.

A parent’s involvement in their individual student’s education is not just a right, it’s a responsibility. Parental involvement and engagement have been shown to contribute to success in student achievement.⁵⁶ According to an April 2024 Pew research survey, teachers feel that there is insufficient parental involvement in public schools, in terms of homework help, attendance, and even behavior.⁵⁷ To fulfill this role, parents need information. Increased parent access to curriculum may be part of that equation.

Tapping potential benefits for teachers, parents and students

There are potential pedagogical and professional benefits to teachers and students as well. For example, one case study showed how parental access to curriculum information could benefit students, parents and teachers by having K-12 instructors at the school post all education programs and assessments online a term in advance.⁵⁸ They found the practice was helpful to teachers, in part because they could learn from each other and collaborate. It also helped instructors focus on their learning objectives.

Parents and students expressed happiness that the curriculum was online. One parent said, “I have the impression that my son has ownership and control through the [program]. He definitely knows where he is going.” Students felt similarly, one saying, “If

I’m away or I fall behind I can see what I have to do.” Helping these stakeholders is a key benefit to teachers, who otherwise cannot always control how involved parents and students are in the learning process.

Importantly, the report said that while the teachers were “initially threatened by the openness, individual teachers have increasingly observed the benefits of a transparently declared curriculum and what it offers in terms of connections with stakeholders and improvements for student outcomes.”⁵⁹

One public school teacher even shared her support for curriculum transparency, notwithstanding all the work that teachers are required to do these days.⁶⁰ One of her main reasons was to avoid blindsiding parents and to prevent “unnecessary friction” between teachers and parents.⁶¹

In the higher education space, studies showed that students whose instructors used transparently designed assignments had an increased sense of belonging, confidence, and understanding of what skills were wanted by future employers.⁶² These benefits were especially pronounced in first-generation, low-income or underrepresented students.⁶³ While focused specifically on design transparency in higher education, such findings highlight the potential of having more information to navigate education, especially for at-risk K-12 students or parents unfamiliar with public education. In this way, increasing parent access serves as an equitable practice, particularly for students at risk academically.

Parent access policy recommendations for Utah

Today's approach to parent access to curriculum should be proactive. The standard must meet a higher threshold than merely a "right to review" when initiated by parents. It ought to be higher than Utah's standard of "readily accessible and available."

From Sutherland Institute's perspective, information about curriculum and instruction policies and materials should be immediately available whenever possible, easily accessible, academically meaningful, and as thorough as pragmatism allows. The trend in public schools is moving in this direction, but public policy could encourage the momentum to help parent access flourish sooner. Three policy recommendations can significantly move Utah toward this parent access standard.

1. School districts or the state board of education should post the list of instructional topics for each grade and subject in public school online and communicate that online resource to parents.

School districts (or the state school board) can turn Utah's core standards into plain language lists of the topics that students should learn in each grade level and subject. While the standards themselves are online, they are not written to be accessible to parents who are not education system experts.⁶⁴ Posting the list of instructional topics online and letting parents know about them offers

parents a practical way to know and be prepared to constructively engage with their student's learning from day one of the school year.

2. School districts should improve implementation of state parent access policies

Since state law already requires districts to make instructional materials used by the district "readily accessible and available for a parent to view," districts ought to investigate their own implementation. They could start simply by updating, posting and organizing instructional materials policies on their website in places where they are most accessible. They could do the same for information on approved curriculum, making a page where the information lives, ensuring it's easily found, and displaying it in a well-organized manner.

The path toward improvement is simple. For instance, districts that do not have any approved curriculum displayed on their website ought to dedicate an easily accessible webpage for it, or access to it. Districts that display information should do an internal review to ensure that it is organized in a user-friendly way and that all the links work. Links to the most commonly used parent access platforms could be hosted on the homepage. These reforms are simple fixes that do not require legislation – simply better implementation.

To support this effort, the Legislature may need to create a fund for districts to use to beef up efforts

to increase parent access to curriculum, including ideas like increasing communication to parents with notices about existing information or hiring district-level parent liaisons to assist with parent inquiries or dedicating staff to updating parent access implementation.

3. The Utah Legislature should enact a program that rewards public school teachers who proactively give parents access to curriculum information

The Legislature could create a grant program that rewards teachers with increased pay, paid professional days, or heightened job security for proactively increasing parent access to information about classroom curriculum. Basically, educators could get a financial or professional benefit for choosing to be proactive about making their own course curriculum available to parents in specific ways outlined by their district.

Educators could qualify for the reward by complying with district-specific details within a required framework that does the following:

1. provide proactive and summary weekly communication to parents about what will be taught in the coming week,
2. offer an in-depth look at day-to-day content, materials, assignments that a teacher will use to instruct students in specific topics of a class/grade; and
3. communicate to parents the instructions for accessing these resources.

To achieve these steps teachers may be encouraged by districts to employ teacher pages on school websites, Canvas, other learning management systems, email, or other tools to which they already have access. The qualifying threshold is simply utilizing them in a robust, good-faith way to achieve a higher level of access for parents. Importantly, this policy would not create any mandate on teachers – only offer opportunities.

For professional educators already taking these steps, implementing these practices now simply rewards their professionalism. For educators not taking these steps, they may feel encouraged to improve their efforts to engage parents through increased course information in order to receive that benefit. For those educators that do not feel equipped to do this work yet, there is no direct negative consequence.

This policy approach is prudent because it is decidedly *pro-teacher*. It avoids micromanaging educators, instead offering optional financial or professional opportunities for doing work that could also help student learning and the parent-teacher relationship. Likewise, it adds rapport to the parent-teacher relationship since the efforts are voluntary, building trust between the teacher and parent.

If state funds are too limited to enact such a widespread program, the Legislature could develop a pilot program that allows a limited number of districts to try it, with a reporting requirement to see how the program improves outcomes after a certain number of years.

Conclusion

The recent uptick in demand for parent access to curriculum is starting to make more sense all the time. Parents want to engage constructively in their child’s education, and they both need and desire the information that empowers them to do so. Far from just being a reaction to the culture war, helping parents have better access to information about curriculum will benefit all education stakeholders.

Utah has made commendable and noteworthy strides in this area in recent years, but since increased parent engagement can improve student learning in powerful ways, the opportunity to do more through reforming parent access policies is too great to ignore. With education culture already

moving this direction, public policy can find ways to support and accelerate it in commonsense ways. This report argues and lays out a plan for needed reforms that are both simple implementation adjustments and new, creative policies.

Fortunately, these policies can be achieved in a uniquely Utah way that supports districts, honors the autonomy of professional educators, and elevates the privilege of parents for the sake of students.

Sutherland Institute public policy interns Megan Myres McMillan, Allison Lawrence and Isabelle Steed contributed to the research for this report.



Endnotes

- ¹ Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Annual Synthesis, 2002), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED474521>.
- ² “What is the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment?” U.S. Department of Education, accessed May 24, 2024, <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/training/what-protection-pupil-rights-amendment#:~:text=The%20Protection%20of%20Pupil%20Rights%20Amendment%2C%20or%20PPRA%2C%20is%20a.use%20of%20personal%20information%20for.>
- ³ “Public Records Law and State Legislatures,” National Conference of State Legislatures, accessed August 8, 2024, <https://www.ncsl.org/cls/public-records-law-and-state-legislatures#:~:text=Resource%20Public%20Records%20Law%20and%20State%20Legislatures&text=To%20help%20increase%20transparency%20and.be%20open%20to%20the%20public.>
- ⁴ Utah Code Ann. § 63G-2-201 (2023).
- ⁵ “No Child Left Behind,” U.S. Department of Education, accessed July 11, 2024, <https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>.
- ⁶ School Grading System, SB 59, 59th Utah Legislature (2011).
- ⁷ School Grading Modifications, HB 308, 65th Utah Legislature (2023).
- ⁸ Parents Bill of Rights Act, HR 5, 118th Congress (2023), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5/text>.
- ⁹ A resource to follow updates on passed legislation regarding parents’ rights and curriculum transparency can be found here: <https://datavisualizations.heritage.org/education/education-power-for-parents-a-state-legislation-tracker/>.
- ¹⁰ Parents Right to Know Act, SB 48, Alabama Legislature (2024).
- ¹¹ School Accountability Measures, HB 156, Alaska Legislature (2015-2016).
- ¹² Parental Rights; sex education, HB 2035, Arizona Legislature (2021).
- ¹³ California Code, EDC, Title 2, Div. 4, Part 28, Ch. 1.5, 51101.
- ¹⁴ Literacy Curriculum Transparency, Colorado General Assembly (2021).
- ¹⁵ Connecticut General Statutes, Title 10, Ch. 163, Sec. 10-4g.
- ¹⁶ CS/HB1467, Florida Legislature (2022).
- ¹⁷ Idaho Statutes, Education § 33-6001.
- ¹⁸ SB 150, General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (2023).
- ¹⁹ Louisiana Revised Statute, Education RS 17:355 .
- ²⁰ Michigan Compiled Laws, Section 380.1137.
- ²¹ Minnesota Statutes, Section 120.B.20.
- ²² Pennsylvania Code, Title 22 § 4.4.
- ²³ Textbook Transparency Act, HB 1513, Tennessee General Assembly (2021).
- ²⁴ Texas Education Code, Title 1, Subtitle E, Ch. 26.
- ²⁵ See next section for list of laws.
- ²⁶ https://www.wvlegislature.gov/Bill_Status/bills_history.cfm?INPUT=422&year=2023&sessiontype=RS.
- ²⁷ Matt Beienburg, “De-Escalating the Curriculum Wars,” Goldwater Institute, January 14, 2020, <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/policy-report/curriculum-wars/>.
- ²⁸ Alex Golden, “Arkansas Gov. Sanders makes education moves,” Axios, January 12, 2023, <https://www.axios.com/local/nw-arkansas/2023/01/12/sarah-huckabee-sanders-education-arkansas-order>.
- ²⁹ “Missouri Attorney General launches Students First Initiative to increase transparency in education,” Press Release, *The Missouri Times*, March 29, 2022, <https://themissouritimes.com/missouri-attorney-general-launches-students-first-initiative-to-increase-transparency-in-education/>.
- ³⁰ Mike Curtis, “Curriculum Transparency, Parent Access, and Sensitive Materials,” Legislative Research & General Counsel, June 14, 2023, <https://le.utah.gov/interim/2023/pdf/00003162.pdf>.
- ³¹ Public School Instructional Material Requirements, SB 55, 65th Utah Legislature (2023).
- ³² Public Education Modifications, SB 148, Utah Legislature (2021).
- ³³ Public School Library Transparency Amendments, HB 465, 65th Utah Legislature (2023).
- ³⁴ Sensitive Material Review Amendments, HB 29, 65th Utah Legislature (2024).
- ³⁵ Public Educator Curriculum Transparency Requirements, HB 234, Utah Legislature (2022).
- ³⁶ Local Policies for Course Content Transparency, HB 344, 65th Utah Legislature (2023).
- ³⁷ Marjorie Cortez, “Curriculum transparency bill critics say is ‘punitive’ to teachers stalls in committee,” *Deseret News*, February 9, 2023, <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2023/2/9/23592735/curriculum-transparency-bill-critics-say-punitive-teachers-stalls-utah-legislature/>.
- ³⁸ Public School Curriculum Requirements, S.B. 114, 64th Utah Legislature, (2022).
- ³⁹ Connor Sanders, “After failed teacher transparency bills, Utah’s state school board updates classroom material policy,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, September 9, 2022, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2022/09/09/parents-can-weigh-what-textbooks/>.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Utah Code Ann. § 53G-6-807 (2023).
- ⁴³ “Parent Portal,” Utah State Board of Education, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://schools.utah.gov/parent>.

- ⁴⁴ Christine Cooke Fairbanks, “Does Canvas Give Parents Robust Access to Curriculum?” Sutherland Institute, August 1, 2024, <https://sutherlandinstitute.org/does-canvas-give-parents-robust-access-to-curriculum/>.
- ⁴⁵ Sutherland Institute, “Strong majority of Utah likely voters support curriculum transparency,” March 20, 2024, <https://sutherlandinstitute.org/strong-majority-of-utah-likely-voters-support-curriculum-transparency/>.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Elizabeth M. Ross, “Despite Progress, Achievement Gaps Persist During Recovery from Pandemic,” Harvard Graduate School of Education, January 31, 2024, <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/news/24/01/despite-progress-achievement-gaps-persist-during-recovery-pandemic>.
- ⁴⁸ Marjorie Cortez, “27% of Utah students are chronically absent. Here’s what lawmakers have directed schools, juvenile justice to do,” *Deseret News*, March 2, 2023, <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2023/3/2/23620926/chronic-school-absenteeism-students-legislature-bill/>.
- ⁴⁹ “Absenteeism and Truancy Prevention,” Utah State Board of Education, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://www.schools.utah.gov/prevention/absenteeismdropout>.
- ⁵⁰ Christine Cooke Fairbanks, “Perspective: What Democrats and Republicans have in common on education curriculum beliefs,” *Deseret News*, December 27, 2023, <https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2023/12/27/24008249/american-family-survey-curriculum-transparency/>.
- ⁵¹ Olina Banerji, “History Group Finds Little Evidence of K-12 ‘Indoctrination,’” *Education Week*, March 20, 2024, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/history-group-finds-little-evidence-of-k-12-indoctrination/2024/03>.
- ⁵² “Education,” Gallup, May 28, 2024, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1612/education.aspx#:~:text=Currently%2C%2036%25%20of%20Americans%20say,in%20the%20low%2050%25%20orange>.
- ⁵³ Christine Cooke Fairbanks, “How curriculum transparency can boost the parent-teacher partnership,” Sutherland Institute, February 7, 2024, <https://sutherlandinstitute.org/how-curriculum-transparency-can-boost-the-parent-teacher-partnership/>.
- ⁵⁴ Utah Code Ann. 80-2a-20.
- ⁵⁵ Utah Code Ann. 53G-6-803.
- ⁵⁶ Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, (Annual Synthesis, 2002), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED474521>.
- ⁵⁷ Luona Lin, Kim Parker, and Juliana Menasce Horowitz, “What’s It Like To Be a Teacher in America Today?” Pew Research Center, April 4, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2024/04/04/whats-it-like-to-be-a-teacher-in-america-today/>.
- ⁵⁸ Nicholas Cook, Shani Hartley, Sandra Woodward, Katie Kovacevic, Paul Thoms, Greg Butler, “Keeping it REAL: How transparency can lead to an aligned curriculum, student centred pedagogy and improved student outcomes,” Oakhill College Reports, The Association of Independent Schools of NSW, <https://www.aisnsw.edu.au/Resources/WAL%204%20Open%20Access/School%20Based%20Research%20Project%20Final%20Report%20Oakhill%20College.pdf>.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Jessica McDermitt, “I’m a Teacher. My Position on Curriculum Transparency Might Surprise You,” Real Clear Politics, March 7, 2022, https://www.realclearpolicy.com/articles/2022/03/07/im_a_teacher_my_position_on_curriculum_transparency_might_surprise_you_820243.html.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² “Recent Findings: Transparency in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education,” University of Nevada, Las Vegas, https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/Provost-TILT-ResearchSummary.pdf.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Parent Guides to Success also exist, but these are also more complicated to read than most parents may be prepared to use.



For more information, visit SutherlandInstitute.org

To learn how to support work like this, visit SutherlandInstitute.org/donate

It's not just a culture war reaction. Helping parents have better access to information about curriculum will benefit all education stakeholders.



Sutherland Institute
420 E. South Temple
Suite 510
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Office – 801.355.1272
si@sifreedom.org
sutherlandinstitute.org

