

Public Education Revisions
2026 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: John D. Johnson
House Sponsor: R. Neil Walter

LONG TITLE

Committee Note:

The Education Interim Committee recommended this bill.

Legislative Vote: 14 voting for 2 voting against 3 absent

General Description:

This bill amends provisions and programs regarding the operation of the public education system.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- authorizes the State Board of Education (state board) to appoint the state superintendent of public instruction as the superintendent of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) and provides associated delegation authority;
- aligns terminology regarding juvenile justice reintegration to apply to all local education agencies rather than only school districts;
- amends provisions to allow the USDB to coordinate with the state security chief rather than the county security chief of the county for each USDB campus;
- allows the state board to reduce suicide prevention grant amounts in certain circumstances; and
- makes technical and conforming changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

53E-8-204, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 509

53G-8-213, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 348

53G-8-701.5, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 388

31 **53G-8-701.6**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapters 388, 470

32 **53G-8-701.8**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 11

33 **53G-9-702**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapters 98, 328

35 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

36 Section 1. Section **53E-8-204** is amended to read:

37 **53E-8-204 . Authority of the state board -- Rulemaking -- Superintendent --**
38 **Advisory council.**

39 (1)(a) The state board is the governing board of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the
40 Blind.

41 (b) The state board shall, as the state board determines necessary, establish committees,
42 policies, or processes necessary to the function and oversight of the Utah Schools for
43 the Deaf and the Blind.

44 (2)(a) The state board shall appoint a superintendent for the Utah Schools for the Deaf
45 and the Blind.

46 (b) The state board shall make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
47 Administrative Rulemaking Act, regarding the qualifications, terms of employment,
48 and duties of the superintendent for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.

49 (c)(i) The state board may appoint the state superintendent as the superintendent for
50 the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind under Subsection (2)(a).

51 (ii) If the state board appoints the state superintendent as the superintendent under
52 Subsection (2)(c)(i), the state superintendent may delegate duties regarding the
53 role of superintendent for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind to another
54 employee of the state board.

55 (3) The superintendent shall:

56 (a) subject to the approval of the state board, appoint an associate superintendent to
57 administer the Utah School for the Deaf based on:

58 (i) demonstrated competency as an expert educator of deaf persons; and

59 (ii) knowledge of school management and the instruction of deaf persons; and

60 (b) subject to the approval of the state board, appoint an associate superintendent to
61 administer the Utah School for the Blind based on:

62 (i) demonstrated competency as an expert educator of blind persons; and

63 (ii) knowledge of school management and the instruction of blind persons, including
64 an understanding of the unique needs and education of deafblind persons.

(4) The state board shall:

(a) approve the annual budget and expenditures of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind; and

(b) administer the financial operations of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.

(5)(a) The state board shall submit a report in accordance with Section 53E-1-201 on the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.

(b) The state board shall ensure that the report described in Subsection (5)(a) includes:

(i) a financial report;

(ii) a report on Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind programs and activities; and

(iii) a report of student academic performance.

Section 2. Section **53G-8-213** is amended to read:

53G-8-213 . Reintegration plan for student alleged to have committed violent felony or weapon offense.

(1) As used in this section, "multidisciplinary team" means:

(a) the local education agency;

(b) the juvenile court;

(c) the Division of Juvenile Justice and Youth Services;

(d) a school safety and security specialist designated under Section 53G-8-701.6;

(e) school safety and security director designated under Section 53G-8-701.8;

(f) a school resource officer if applicable; and

(g) any other relevant party that should be involved in a reintegration plan.

(2) If a school district receives a notification from the juvenile court or a law enforcement agency that a student was arrested for, charged with, or adjudicated in the juvenile court for a serious offense, the school shall develop a reintegration plan for the student with a multidisciplinary team, the student, and the student's parent or guardian, within five school days after the day on which the school receives a notification.

(3) The school may deny admission to the student until the school completes the reintegration plan under Subsection (2).

(4) The reintegration plan under Subsection (2) shall address:

(a) a behavioral intervention for the student;

(b) a short-term mental health or counseling service for the student;

(c) an academic intervention for the student; and

(d) if the serious offense was directed at a school employee or another student within the school, notification of the reintegration plan to that school employee or student and

the student's parent.

(5) ~~[A school district]~~ An LEA may not reintegrate a student into a school where:

(a) a student or staff member has a protective order against the student being reintegrated; or

(b) a student or staff member is the victim of a sexual crime or forcible felony committed by the student being reintegrated.

(6)(a) Notwithstanding Subsection (2), ~~[a school district]~~ an LEA may elect to not integrate a student into a school if the student has committed, or allegedly committed, a forcible felony.

(b) If ~~[a school district]~~ an LEA elects to not integrate a student under Subsection (6)(a), the ~~[school district]~~ LEA shall provide alternative education options for the student.

(7) A reintegration plan under this section is classified as a protected record under Section 63G-2-305.

(8) All other records of disclosures under this section are governed by Title 63G, Chapter 2, Government Records Access and Management Act, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1232g.

Section 3. Section **53G-8-701.5** is amended to read:

53G-8-701.5 . School safety needs assessment -- School safety personnel --

Alternative requirements.

(1)(a) In accordance with Subsections (1)(c) through (e), no later than October 15 of an applicable year, an LEA shall:

(i) ensure a school safety needs assessment the state security chief selects in collaboration with the school safety center is conducted in accordance with Subsection (1)(b) for each school or K-12 campus within the LEA to determine the needs and deficiencies regarding:

(A) appropriate school safety personnel, including necessary supports, training, and policy creation for the personnel;

(B) physical building security and safety, including required upgrades to facilities and safety technology;

(C) a school's current threat and emergency response protocols, including any emergency response agreements with local law enforcement;

(D) cardiac emergency preparedness, including an inventory of whether automated external defibrillators are present and accessible, maintenance status, and current staff training offerings; and

- 133 (E) compliance with universal access key box requirements under Section
134 53G-8-805; and
- 135 (ii) report the results of the school safety needs assessment for each school within the
136 LEA to the state security chief and the School Safety Center.
- 137 (b)(i) The school safety specialist described in Section 53G-8-701.6, in collaboration
138 with the county security chief or, regarding the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the
139 Blind, the state security chief, and with the local law enforcement of relevant
140 jurisdiction over the school as described in Section 53-25-701, shall conduct the
141 school safety needs assessment for each school.
- 142 (ii) A school safety and security director may fulfill the role of a school safety and
143 security specialist in conducting the school safety needs assessment.
- 144 (c) The school safety needs assessment required under Subsection (1)(a)(i) shall be
145 conducted at least once every three years for each school or K-12 campus.
- 146 (d) An LEA may implement a rotating or staggered schedule for conducting school
147 safety needs assessments among the buildings within the LEA, provided that:
- 148 (i) each school within a K-12 campus is assessed at least once every three years; and
149 (ii) the LEA documents the rotating or staggered assessment schedule and shares this
150 schedule with the state security chief, the School Safety Center, the county
151 security chief regarding a school other than the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the
152 Blind, and the local law enforcement of relevant jurisdiction as described in
153 Section 53-25-701.
- 154 (e) The LEA shall update the assessment schedule as necessary to ensure compliance
155 with the three-year assessment requirement under Subsection (1)(c).
- 156 (f) The state board shall use the results of the school safety needs assessment for each
157 school within an LEA to award a grant to an LEA in accordance with Section
158 53F-5-220.
- 159 (g) Any information or record detailing a school's needs assessment results is:
- 160 (i) a private, controlled, or protected record under Title 63G, Chapter 2, Government
161 Records Access and Management Act; and
- 162 (ii) available only to:
- 163 (A) the state security chief;
- 164 (B) the School Safety Center;
- 165 (C) members of an LEA governing board;
- 166 (D) administrators of the LEA and school the needs assessment concerns;

- 167 (E) only to the extent necessary to award a grant under Section 53F-5-220, the
168 state board;
- 169 (F) the applicable school safety personnel described in Subsection (2);
- 170 (G) a local law enforcement agency that would respond to the school in case of an
171 emergency; and
- 172 (H) the county security chief regarding a school other than the Utah Schools for
173 the Deaf and the Blind.
- 174 (h) An individual who intentionally or knowingly provides the information described in
175 Subsection (1)(g) to an individual or entity not listed in Subsection (1)(g)(ii) is guilty
176 of a class B misdemeanor.
- 177 (2)(a) An LEA shall ensure each school within the LEA has the following school safety
178 personnel:
- 179 (i) a school safety and security specialist described in Section 53G-8-701.6; and
180 (ii) based on the results of the needs assessment described in Subsection (1), at least
181 one of the following:
- 182 (A) a school resource officer;
183 (B) a school guardian; or
184 (C) an armed school security guard.
- 185 (b) In addition to the school safety personnel described in Subsection (2)(a), an LEA
186 shall designate a school safety and security director described in Section 53G-8-701.8.
- 187 (c) The same individual may serve in more than one of the roles listed in Subsections
188 (2)(a) and (b) if the school notifies the School Safety Center and the state security
189 chief of the decision to have the same individual serve in multiple roles as described
190 in this Subsection (2).
- 191 (d) An LEA may implement the requirements of Subsection (2)(a)(ii) before the LEA
192 has completed the school safety needs assessment described in Subsection (1).
- 193 (e) The state security chief in consultation with the School Safety Center shall establish
194 a timeline for an LEA to comply with the school safety personnel requirements of
195 this Subsection (2).
- 196 (3)(a) An LEA, school administrator, or private school may apply to the state security
197 chief for an approved alternative to the requirements described in:
- 198 (i) Section 53-22-105;
199 (ii) this section;
200 (iii) Section 53G-8-701.6;

(iv) Section 53G-8-701.8; and

(v) Section 53G-8-704.

(b) In approving or denying an application described in Subsection (3)(a), the state security chief may consider factors that impact a school or LEA's ability to adhere to the requirements of this section, including the school or LEA's:

(i) population size;

(ii) staffing needs or capacity;

(iii) geographic location;

(iv) available funding; or

(v) general demonstration of need for an alternative to the requirements of this section.

(4) A private school shall identify an individual at the private school to serve as the safety liaison with the local law enforcement of relevant jurisdiction and the state security chief.

Section 4. Section **53G-8-701.6** is amended to read:

53G-8-701.6 . School safety and security specialist.

(1) As used in this section, "principal" means the chief administrator at a public school, including:

(a) a school principal;

(b) a charter school director; or

(c) the superintendent of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.

(2)(a) Subject to Subsection (2)(b) and except as provided in Subsection 53G-8-701.5(3), every campus within an LEA shall designate a school safety and security specialist from the employees of the relevant campus.

(b) The school safety and security specialist:

(i) may not be a principal; and

(ii) may be the school safety and security director at one campus within the LEA.

(3) The school safety and security specialist shall:

(a) report directly to the principal;

(b) oversee school safety and security practices to ensure a safe and secure school environment for students and staff;

(c) ensure adherence with all policies, procedures, protocols, rules, and regulations relating to school safety and security through collaborating and maintaining effective communications with the following as applicable:

(i) the principal;

- (ii) school staff;
- (iii) the school resource officer;
- (iv) the armed school security guard;
- (v) the school guardian;
- (vi) local law enforcement;
- (vii) the county security chief regarding a school other than the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind;
- (viii) the school safety and security director;
- (ix) the LEA; and
- (x) school-based behavioral and mental health professionals;
- (d) in collaboration with the county security chief or, regarding the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, the state security chief, and with the local law enforcement of relevant jurisdiction over the school as described in Section 53-25-701:
 - (i) conduct the school safety needs assessment described in Section 53G-8-701.5;
 - (ii) in accordance with Sections 53-25-701 and 53G-8-701.5, submit the completed assessments to the School Safety Center created in Section 53G-8-802 by October 15 of each year; and
 - (iii) review the results of the school safety needs assessment to recommend and implement improvements to school facilities, policies, procedures, protocols, rules, and regulations relating to school safety and security;
- (e) participate on the multidisciplinary team that the school establishes;
- (f) conduct a behavioral threat assessment when the school safety and security specialist deems necessary using an evidence-based tool the state security chief recommends in consultation with the school safety center and the Office of Substance Use and Mental Health;
- (g) regularly monitor and report to the principal, local law enforcement, and, if applicable, the LEA superintendent or designee, security risks for the school resulting from:
 - (i) issues with school facilities; or
 - (ii) the implementation of practices, policies, procedures, and protocols relating to school safety and security;
- (h) coordinate with local first responder agencies to implement and monitor safety and security drills in accordance with policy and applicable procedures and protocols;
- (i) ensure that school staff, and, when appropriate, students, receive training on and

- 269 remain current on the school's safety and security procedures and protocols;
- 270 (j) following an event where security of the school has been significantly compromised,
- 271 organize a debriefing with the individuals listed in Subsection (3)(c) following the
- 272 recommendations from the state security chief, in collaboration with the School
- 273 Safety Center, regarding strengthening school safety and security practices, policies,
- 274 procedures, and protocols;
- 275 (k) abide by any LEA, school, or law enforcement agency policy outlining the chain of
- 276 command;
- 277 (l) during an emergency, coordinate with the following individuals as applicable, the:
- 278 (i) school resource officer;
- 279 (ii) school guardians;
- 280 (iii) armed school security guards;
- 281 (iv) school administrators; and
- 282 (v) responding law enforcement officers;
- 283 (m) follow any LEA, school, or law enforcement agency student privacy policies,
- 284 including state and federal privacy laws;
- 285 (n) participate in an annual training the state security chief selects in consultation with
- 286 the School Safety Center; and
- 287 (o) remain current on:
- 288 (i) a comprehensive school guideline the state security chief selects;
- 289 (ii) the duties of a school safety and security specialist described in this Subsection (3);
- 290 and
- 291 (iii) the school's emergency response plan.

- 292 (4) During an active emergency at the school, the school safety and security specialist is
- 293 subordinate to any responding law enforcement officers.

294 Section 5. Section **53G-8-701.8** is amended to read:

295 **53G-8-701.8 . School safety and security director.**

- 296 (1) Except as provided in Subsection 53G-8-701.5(3), an LEA shall designate a school
- 297 safety and security director as the LEA point of contact for the county security chief
- 298 regarding a school other than the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, local law
- 299 enforcement, and the state security chief.
- 300 (2) A school safety and security director shall:
- 301 (a) participate in and satisfy the training requirements as follows:
- 302 (i) only once, the training requirements described in Section 53-22-105 for school

- 303 guardians; and
- 304 (ii) the school resource officer and administrator training the state security chief
- 305 approves in consultation with the School Safety Center;
- 306 (b) if serving as a backup school guardian, satisfy all requirements described in
- 307 53-22-105;
- 308 (c) if the designee is an employee of an LEA, participate on the multidisciplinary team
- 309 the LEA establishes;
- 310 (d) coordinate security responses among, if applicable, the following individuals in the
- 311 LEA that employs the school safety and security director:
- 312 (i) school safety and security specialists;
- 313 (ii) school resource officers;
- 314 (iii) armed school security guards; and
- 315 (iv) school guardians; and
- 316 (e) collaborate and maintain effective communications with local law enforcement, a
- 317 county security chief or, regarding the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, the
- 318 state security chief, the LEA, and school-based behavioral and mental health
- 319 professionals to ensure adherence with all policies, procedures, protocols, rules, and
- 320 regulations relating to school safety and security.
- 321 (3) A school safety and security director:
- 322 (a) does not have authority to act in a law enforcement capacity; and
- 323 (b) may, at the LEA that employs the director:
- 324 (i) take actions necessary to prevent or abate an active threat; and
- 325 (ii) temporarily detain an individual when the school safety and security director has
- 326 reasonable cause to believe the individual has committed or is about to commit a
- 327 forcible felony.
- 328 (4) Notwithstanding Subsection 76-11-205(4), if a school safety and security director is
- 329 carrying a firearm, the school safety and security director shall carry the school safety
- 330 and security director's firearm in a concealed manner and may not, unless during an
- 331 active threat, display or open carry a firearm while on school grounds.
- 332 (5) A school may use the services of the school safety and security director on a temporary
- 333 basis to satisfy the school safety personnel requirement of Subsection 53G-8-701.5(2).
- 334 (6) The state security chief shall:
- 335 (a) for each school safety and security director, track each school safety and security
- 336 director by collecting the photograph and the name and contact information for each

337 school safety and security director; and

- 338 (b) make the information described in Subsection (6)(a) readily available to each law
339 enforcement agency in the state categorized by LEA.

340 Section 6. Section **53G-9-702** is amended to read:

341 **53G-9-702 . Youth suicide prevention programs -- State board to develop model**
342 **programs.**

343 (1) As used in the section:

344 (a) "Elementary grades" means:

345 (i) kindergarten through grade 5; and

346 (ii) if the associated middle or junior high school does not include grade 6, grade 6.

347 (b) "Intervention" means an effort to prevent a student from attempting suicide.

348 (c) "Postvention" means mental health intervention after a suicide attempt or death to
349 prevent or contain contagion.

350 (d) "Program" means a youth suicide prevention program described in Subsection (2).

351 (e) "Public education suicide prevention coordinator" means an individual designated by
352 the state board as described in Subsection (4).

353 (f) "Secondary grades" means:

354 (i) grades 7 through 12; and

355 (ii) if a middle or junior high school includes grade 6, grade 6.

356 (g) "State suicide prevention coordinator" means the state suicide prevention coordinator
357 described in Section 26B-5-611.

358 (2) In collaboration with the public education suicide prevention coordinator, a school
359 district or charter school shall implement a youth suicide prevention program, which, in
360 collaboration with the training, programs, and initiatives described in Section 53G-9-607,
361 shall include programs and training to address:

362 (a) for elementary grades and secondary grades:

363 (i) life-affirming education, including on the concepts of resiliency, healthy habits,
364 self-care, problem solving, and conflict resolution;

365 (ii) methods of strengthening the family; and

366 (iii) methods of strengthening a youth's relationships in the school and community;
367 and

368 (b) for secondary grades:

369 (i) prevention of youth suicide;

370 (ii) decreasing the risk of suicide among youth who are:

- 371 (A) not accepted by family for any reason, including lesbian, gay, bisexual,
372 transgender, or questioning youth; or
373 (B) suffer from bullying;
374 (iii) youth suicide intervention; and
375 (iv) postvention for family, students, and faculty.
- 376 (3) Each school district and charter school shall ensure that the youth suicide prevention
377 program described in Subsection (2):
378 (a) considers appropriate coordination with the following prevention programs:
379 (i) the prevention of bullying and cyber-bullying, as those terms are defined in
380 Section 53G-9-601; and
381 (ii) the prevention of underage drinking of alcohol and substance abuse under Section
382 53G-10-406; and
383 (b) includes provisions to ensure that the school district or charter school promptly
384 communicates with the parent or guardian of a student in accordance with Section
385 53G-9-604.
- 386 (4) The state board shall:
387 (a) designate a public education suicide prevention coordinator; and
388 (b) in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services and the state
389 suicide prevention coordinator, develop model programs to provide to school districts
390 and charter schools:
391 (i) program training; and
392 (ii) resources regarding the required components described in Subsections (2)(a) and
393 (b).
- 394 (5) The public education suicide prevention coordinator shall:
395 (a) oversee the youth suicide prevention programs of school districts and charter
396 schools; and
397 (b) coordinate prevention and postvention programs, services, and efforts with the state
398 suicide prevention coordinator.
- 399 (6) A public school suicide prevention program may allow school personnel to ask a
400 student questions related to youth suicide prevention, intervention, or postvention.
- 401 (7)(a) Subject to legislative appropriation and except as provided in Section 53F-2-525,
402 the state board may distribute money to a school district or charter school to be used
403 to implement evidence-based practices and programs, or emerging best practices and
404 programs, for preventing suicide in the school district or charter school.

- (b) The state board shall ensure that an LEA's allocation of funds from the board's distribution of money under Subsection (7)(a) provides[-] :
- (i) an amount equal to at least \$1,000 per school[-] ; or
 - (ii) if appropriations are not available to provide the amount described in Subsection (7)(b)(i), a commensurately lesser amount.

(c)(i) A school shall use money allocated to the school under Subsection (7)(b) to implement evidence-based practices and programs, or emerging best practices and programs, for preventing suicide.

(ii) Each school may select the evidence-based practices and programs, or emerging best practices and programs, for preventing suicide that the school implements.

(8) An LEA may not charge indirect costs to the program.

Section 7. Effective Date.

This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.