

Project Abstract:

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) has worked collaboratively with public and private schools in Utah to propose “Utah CONNECTS: Personalizing Learning for Utah Families”. Utah CONNECTS is a solution for **Absolute Priority 1 - Continued Learning Parent Microgrants**. The state of Utah will offer microgrants to parents to meet the educational needs of their school-age children through increased access to high-quality remote learning options from a list of education and related services, expenses, and providers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has surfaced the lack of equity to our most vulnerable students and heightened the urgency to provide high-quality digital learning for families through access to technology and the educational services needed to deliver remote learning successfully. Digital learning was the primary mechanism for K-12 education beginning in March 2020 when Utah schools went to remote learning and is no longer optional. In the continued uncertainty, each student deserves access to proven, equitable, rigorous, standards-based digital coursework. Additionally, each family deserves access to digital learning experiences that will make remote learning more effective.

Utah CONNECTS is advancing next-generation education models that transcend the traditional boundaries between “high school” and “college,” eliminating barriers based on location, modality, background, and income so each learner can thrive. The proposal creates a comprehensive solution for serving Utah families of students in grades 9-12 with access to robust remote learning opportunities and resources, such as learning coaches, to improve student outcomes. Utah CONNECTS illustrates our commitment to serving each Utah family with high-quality educational experiences to help prepare our students to “...succeed and lead by having the knowledge and skills to learn, engage civically, and lead meaningful lives.” (USBE Vision Statement, 2020)

Utah CONNECTS develops options for remote learning solutions where online high school and university courses converge in a unique learning opportunity for 9-12 students. Working with several accredited, rigorous virtual school programs, we provide parents choices in selecting coursework that prepares students for college acceptance and encourages them to start earning credit toward college majors and careers in an increasingly interconnected environment. Additionally, Utah CONNECTS includes opportunities for home broadband infrastructure and student technology devices to support the implementation of the remote coursework to all Utah families.

Utah CONNECTS is committed to implementing a continuous improvement process informed by project performance measures. These measures include the number of students served by the project (target: 7,500 families total), the percentage of parents who report satisfaction with the remote learning opportunities (target: 88% parent satisfaction), the percentage of completed courses by provider (target: 90% of courses completed) , and the student to instructor ratio by provider (target: average 20 students to 1 instructor). Additionally, the project will measure student demonstrated competency as an educational student learning outcome. This demonstrates the commitment to both parent and student success with high-quality educational experiences in Utah.

The Utah State Board of Education has identified personalized learning for all students as a key goal in the agency strategic plan. Utah CONNECTS will develop additional infrastructure to support the realization of personalized learning for Utah’s families, with a specific focus on serving families that have been highly impacted by COVID-19.