

# VOTE YES *on* HB380

Utah School Readiness Initiative Amendments



## High-quality preschool improves school readiness



6 out of 10

low-income children in Utah are not kindergarten ready in literacy standards when they start school.

In 2014, the Utah State Legislature passed the **Utah School Readiness Initiative (Hughes)**: A unique high-quality preschool program targeted at low-income, at-risk students.

### RESULTS TO DATE:

The initiative leverages private investment that is only repaid if specific results are achieved.

Over **4,000** children served

**93%** of at risk children avoided special education

**\$1.7** million saved to date

**Students are reaping the rewards of a kick-started education.** Children's success in school and later in life is to a great extent dependent upon their ability to read and write.

Recent Granite School District (GSD) Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test scores are showing that more students who attended preschool through the initiative are reading on grade level compared to similar peers who didn't attend preschool in the district:



**More low-income kindergartners** who attended preschool are **on track with literacy** than their peers who did not



**More first graders** who attended preschool are **reading on grade-level** than those who did not

SOURCE: Granite School District DIBELS Scores.

## HB380 will expand and strengthen the Utah School Readiness Initiative so that many more low-income children can gain access to high-quality preschool opportunities.

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## Utah School Readiness Initiative Amendments

**HB380 amends the Utah School Readiness Initiative**—a unique high-quality preschool program targeted at low income, at-risk students—that Speaker Hughes sponsored in 2014. The initiative allows the state to enter into pay for success contracts. This is the final year of the negotiated contract, and 1,000 children are currently receiving high-quality preschool.

### These changes are necessary to:

1. Continue to fund 1,000 high-quality preschool slots targeted to Utah's highest-risk students
2. Save money and serve more children by directly contracting with the unique data and results-focused programs that have been successfully proven over the past four years
3. Target new pay for success financing from private investors to programs that are beginning to demonstrate results

## WHAT IS BEING CHANGED?

### A few key changes are being made:

1. To ensure programs are targeting our most at-risk students, "eligible student" is defined as:
  - Eligible for free or reduced lunch *AND*
  - **Having one or more risk factors** (according to parental reporting)
2. Moves the program to the Department of Workforce Services, which is already responsible for other early childhood programming
3. Allows proven programs to receive direct contracts for providing services, while still holding them accountable to performance outcomes
4. Creates a consistent school readiness assessment to help providers understand where each student starts school

## WHAT STAYS THE SAME?

### The bill keeps everything that currently works. *It preserves:*

1. Parental choice—the initiative continues to support parental choice to decide:
  - **If their child goes to preschool**
  - **What program**—school, private or home-based—they want their child to attend
2. Focus on Utah's most at-risk students
3. Pay for success contracting for programs that are high-quality, but do not have a long history of performance outcome data to justify direct contracting
4. Grants program that help programs invest in increasing the quality of their program
5. No new money is appropriated



## WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE ORIGINAL BILL?

The intent of the program was to **reduce costs to the state** by providing high-quality preschool services to children at-risk of needing later special education services due to a lack of development in a child's formative years.

Currently, our most at-risk children start school way behind. Without early intervention, it is hard for them to ever catch up. At-risk children who do not have the opportunity to attend a high-quality preschool program start behind and stay behind, costing them **and the state**.

