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Treasurer Damschen, State Superintendent Dickson Announce Largest Permanent State School Fund Distribution in Utah History

Funds go to schools for programs chosen by parents, teachers and principals at no cost to taxpayers

SALT LAKE CITY – At an event at Nibley Park School, Utah State Treasurer David Damschen, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sydnee Dickson, and School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) Director David Ure today announced the largest distribution from the Permanent State School Fund in Utah history.

The year's disbursement to schools increased to a record \$64.25 million – a 30 percent increase over the previous year's distribution of \$49.3 million. The spike in distributions is due to continued growth and investment of the \$2.3 billion Permanent State School Fund and Utah voter passage of Constitutional Amendment B in November 2016. Amendment B enhances Permanent State School Fund distributions to schools while protecting future growth of the fund for tomorrow's students.

“Every dollar we earn through prudent investment of the Permanent State School Fund is a dollar in school funding not paid by the Utah taxpayer – and this is the highest distribution in Utah history thanks to Utah voters' passage of Amendment B,” said Treasurer Damschen. “These funds support the greatest academic needs at individual schools, such as classroom technology right here at Nibley Park.”

Under the School LAND Trust Program, investment earnings from the Permanent State School Fund are distributed to individual schools statewide to support academic programs. Each school's community council, comprised of parents, teachers and the principal, annually determines greatest academic needs.

Nibley Park School's Community Council chose to use its \$44,238 disbursement in School LAND Trust Funds this year to increase student access to technology with a focus on improving math skills. They also funded a fine arts program, which included hiring a music instructor. These are just two of many examples of the benefits of this funding, which is applied to the greatest needs at the local level, and which comes at no cost to Utah taxpayers.

“The School LAND Trust program brings millions of much-needed dollars to be used for classroom students,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sydnee Dickson. “Schools develop these plans to improve student academic performance in targeted ways determined by local stakeholders.”

Annual distributions augment state education funding and have grown from just \$18.4 million in 2007 to \$64.25 million this year.

“Over the past 10 years, SITLA has contributed more than \$1 billion to the Permanent School Fund, which is revenue generated from energy, real estate, and surface development on the 3.3 million acres of school trust land,” said SITLA Director David Ure. “It’s a pleasure to see the positive impacts these funds are having in Utah classrooms.”

School LAND Trust Funding Highlights in Utah:

Roy Elementary – Weber District

2017-18 Distribution: \$46,697

Over the past few years, the School LAND Trust Plan at Roy Elementary has focused on reading achievement and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). The STEM portion of the plan has paid a teacher to direct and supervise fourth- through sixth-grade students in building and programming robots. Students also get to participate in a robotics competition.

Helen M. Knight Elementary – Grand District

2017-18 Distribution: \$142,150

Helen M. Knight Elementary has dedicated a portion of School LAND Trust funds over the past few years to extended learning experiences for students. The school’s plan supports teaching positions in the arts and language acquisition programs. Students learn through in-person experiences at each grade level. First-grade students travel to Arches National Park to study landforms, art and science; fifth-grade students participate in a traveling American history classroom to Boston.

Montezuma Creek Elementary – San Juan District

2017-18 Distribution: \$35,372

Montezuma Creek Elementary’s plan includes a strong emphasis on reading by encouraging students to continue reading through summer months. School LAND Trust funds pay the librarian to keep the library open for six weeks in the summer. Students enjoy participating in library activities and check out books through those summer weeks. As part of the science goal, students participate in a science fair in preparation for the Navajo Nation Science Fair.

Dixie High – Washington District

2017-18 Distribution: \$107,188

School Land Trust funds at Dixie High have helped to increase graduation rates by providing support classes for math students, immediate and ongoing credit recovery classes, and daily tutoring. The Rebound program, which provides students additional time with teachers, has decreased failing grades from 8.6 percent to 4.8 percent. Students also participate in ACT preparation classes to help maximize their performance on that test. These programs, along with interventions, have resulted in a significant increase in graduation rates, improving from 77 percent in 2011 to 96 percent in 2016.