

Montana School Funding Interim Commission

Innovation and Excellence and Education Working Group Report  
Recommendations Outline

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## Note from the Commission

These recommendations and the subsequent implementation plan represent a collaborative effort among the broad and diverse stakeholder groups represented by our Innovation and Excellence in Education Working Group (IEEWG), the partners who participated in design sessions, and the stakeholders who participated in the in-person and remote roadshows. This report not only includes input from Pre-K-12 educators, but also leaders in business, higher education, advocacy groups, and community-based organizations.

Given the many policy priorities of the IEEWG, the ambitious nature of Montana's constitutional guarantee, and the breadth of our policy recommendations, it is inevitable that not every member of the Commission agrees with every word of this document. Indeed, Commissioners have enjoyed spirited debate on many of the finer points.

All the same, Commissioners agree that this report is faithful to the substance of the Commission's learning and deliberations. Given our diverse backgrounds, we do not have consensus on every recommendation. Several recommendations elicited more debate (and some disagreement) and warrant further discussion as the implementation plan continues to evolve. However, we do believe the report represents a strong foundation with significant agreement about the direction our education system must take in order to meet the needs of businesses, communities, families, educators, taxpayers, policymakers, and, most importantly, Montana's learners.

# Recommended design features of governance and implementation systems

## Policy design features

- Harmonize policy language and nomenclature.
- Write specific policy 'triggers' into enacting legislation and policy.

## Performance management and monitoring design features

- Provide sufficient state capacity to conduct state and local continuous improvement activities.
- Clarify processes for resolving reporting challenges that arise from policy changes.
- Develop clear performance-based 'on-ramps' and 'off-ramps' for recommendation implementation initiatives.
- Provide consistent, clear, public quality of opportunity checks.
- Identify and support "innovation laboratories."

## Governance design features

- Seek coherent state governance.
- Design new systems structures to coherently govern implementation.
- Reconsider existing governance - don't just add new governance

## Infrastructure Policy Design Features

- Consider how any expansion in transportation services is funded and for whom.
- Develop solutions for providing necessary infrastructure upgrades.
- Design new infrastructure for the needs of the future, not the past.

## Educational program design features

- Ensure statewide information about and access to high quality instructional materials.
- Pursue statewide efforts to improve student mental health and school culture.
- Consider the impact of the school year on Montana's education system.

## Public engagement design features

- Provide consistent avenues for consistent public engagement.

# Policy Recommendations and Implementation Plan

## Transforming Teaching

- a. Strengthen Recruitment and Preparation Pathways.
- b. Build a System of Real-Time Professional Growth.
- c. Redesign School Staffing Structures.
- d. Create Career Pathways that Retain Excellent Educators.
- e. Expand Support for National Board Certification.
- f. Develop a Continuum of Leader Preparation and Support.
- g. Ensure Competitive Compensation.

## Early Learning

1. Update Funding Formulas to Include Early Childhood Education.
2. Provide Upfront Funding to Launch Early Targeted Intervention Programs.
3. Provide Early Childhood Educators with High-Quality Professional Development and Instructional Materials.
4. Establish A Single Suite of Statewide Universal Screeners.
5. Provide Transportation Reimbursement for Early Childhood Programming Participants.
6. Create the Conditions for a Voluntary, Opt-In Early Learning Program.
7. Continue to Allow Communities to use Community-Based Programs to provide ECE.
8. Develop clear “policy triggers” that provide clear “go/no go” decision rules for expansion.

## Pathways to Graduation

1. Increase the Number of Funded Middle School Career Exploration Experiences.
2. Increase Overall Funding for Middle School Career Exploration.

## Learner-Centered Design

1. Resolve And Reconcile Competing Definitions.
2. Develop a Roadmap for Learner Centered Design.

# Recommendations Categorized by Cost

## Low-cost Recommendations

### Transforming Teaching

1. Strengthen Recruitment and Preparation Pathways
2. Build a System of Real-Time Professional Growth
3. Redesign School Staffing Structures
4. Create Career Pathways that Retain Excellent Educators
6. Develop a Continuum of Leader Preparation and Support
7. Ensure Competitive Compensation

### Early Learning

3. Provide Early Childhood Educators with High-Quality Professional Development And Instructional Materials
4. Establish A Single Suite of Statewide Universal Screeners
7. Continue To Support Community-Based Programs

### Pathways to Graduation

1. Increase the Number of Funded Middle School Career Exploration Career Exploration Experiences

### Learner Centered Design

1. Resolve And Reconcile Competing Definitions
2. Develop A Roadmap for Learner Centered Design

## Medium-cost Recommendations

### Transform Teaching

3. Redesign School Staffing Structures
4. Create Career Pathways that Retain Excellent Educators
5. Expand Support for National Board Certification
6. Develop a Continuum of Leader Preparation and Support

### Early Learning

2. Provide upfront funding to launch early targeted intervention programs
5. Provide Transportation Reimbursement for Early Childhood Programming Participants

### Pathways to Graduation

2. Increase Overall Funding for Middle School Career Exploration

## Higher-cost Recommendations

Several recommendations do require more significant investment. These recommendations are largely those that result in changes to salary costs.

### Transform Teaching

7. Ensure Competitive Compensation

### Early Learning

1. Update funding formulas to include early childhood education
6. Create a voluntary, opt-in early learning program