



Data Available for Policy Makers

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Current Data Dashboard and Availability

GEMS (Growth & Enhancement of Montana Students) is Montana’s Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLDS). It collects and organizes data from school districts across the state and provides public dashboards and reports that show trends in student outcomes, school performance, and school finance.

The goal of the platform is to give stakeholders transparent, data-driven insight into the success of Montana’s schools and support better decision-making at the state and local levels.

The system has two primary components:

- Public dashboards anyone can view
- Secure dashboards for school staff that include student-level information (protected for privacy and to comply with privacy laws)

Major Types of Information Available on GEMS

Student Achievement & Performance

The site provides data on how students are performing academically across Montana.

Key metrics include:

- State assessment results in math, English language arts, and science
- Graduation and dropout rates
- College readiness indicators
- Performance trends by grade level and subject

These dashboards allow users to examine performance statewide or filter down to district, school, or demographic group. Policymakers can identify where academic performance is strong and where targeted improvement efforts are needed.

Student Demographics & Characteristics

GEMS also provides insight into the composition of Montana's student population, including:

- Enrollment trends
- American Indian student data
- English learner populations
- Student program participation
- Attendance and engagement metrics

This allows policymakers to understand who Montana's students are and how outcomes vary across populations.

School & District Profiles

The platform includes detailed profiles for every school and district in Montana.

These dashboards provide:

- Enrollment levels
- Attendance rates
- Assessment proficiency levels
- Programs offered at the school
- Accreditation and accountability information

Leaders can compare schools or districts to understand differences in performance, resources, or program availability.

Education Finance Data

The finance dashboards show how schools are funded and how funding trends change over time.

Examples of financial data include:

- District revenues and expenditures
- Historical funding trends
- Financial breakdowns at the district level

- Fiscal year comparisons across districts

These dashboards provide a visual representation of school finance trends, making it easier to see how resources are distributed.

Federal Accountability & ESSA Report Cards

The site also hosts dashboards connected to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) report cards.

These provide insight into:

- School performance ratings
- Schools identified for targeted or comprehensive support
- Federal accountability metrics
- State and district report cards

This helps ensure compliance with federal reporting while also providing transparency to communities.

How Policymakers Can Use GEMS

GEMS helps policymakers make better education decisions by providing clear data on student outcomes, school programs, and funding across Montana. By analyzing this data, leaders can identify achievement gaps, evaluate the effectiveness of programs like Career and Technical Education or dual enrollment, and make more informed school funding decisions.

The system also allows policymakers to examine trends across districts, counties, and regions, helping them understand the unique needs of rural communities and track long-term changes in enrollment, performance, funding, and graduation rates.

By using GEMS, policymakers can move beyond anecdotal information and rely on real data to identify challenges early, target resources where they are needed most, evaluate whether policies are working, and improve transparency for families and communities. Ultimately, it supports smarter decisions that improve outcomes for Montana students and schools.

Dashboard Modernization & Updates

The Office of Public Instruction has utilized the Montana Innovation through Infrastructure (MITI) federal grant for modernization of the report card dashboard. A new dashboard for the federally required ESSA report card is currently in development with PowerSchool and will be launched in the coming weeks after data validation is complete. This new platform will improve the usability of data allowing for easy downloads and improve the functionality and display of data.