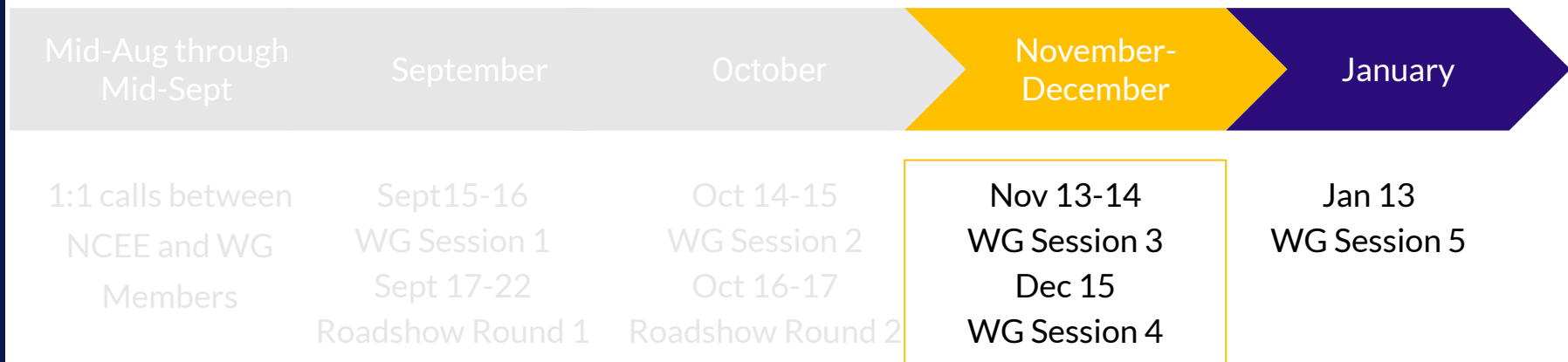# The Statutory Charge

The Innovation and Excellence in Education Working Group

The IEEWG is tasked with:

- comparing the education policies of Montana with the policies of high-performing international and domestic educational systems;
- developing recommendations to adapt the appropriate education policies of high-performing education systems for the public education system in Montana;
- developing an implementation plan for the recommendations; and
- publishing its recommendations and implementation plan no later than January 30, 2026.

Our Timeline: August 2025 - January 2026

Mid-Aug through Mid-Sept	September	October	November-December	January
1:1 calls between NCEE and WG Members	Sept15-16 WG Session 1 Sept 17-22 Roadshow Round 1	Oct 14-15 WG Session 2 Oct 16-17 Roadshow Round 2	Nov 13-14 WG Session 3 Dec 15 WG Session 4	Jan 13 WG Session 5

NCEE's role

Engage parents, educators and the public in shared learning
Seek inspiration for goals for Montana's best possible education system
Build shared ownership by using similar learning experiences

Commissioner roles

Serve as community ambassadors
Spread the word to constituents about the Roadshow opportunity

OBJECTIVES FOR WORKGROUP SESSIONS

Discover: Looking Out

Learn from high-performing systems, both globally and in similar states, to surface innovations

Discover: Looking In

Identify strengths and opportunities to build on within Montana

Design:

Align around a core vision for Montana's young people

Design:

Finalize a prioritized list of system improvements to include in the implementation plan

Our Commitments

Bring Your Whole Self
Your ideas, questions, stories, and lived experiences are a part of the work. Share them.

Listen to Understand
Seek curiosity. Make space for perspectives different from your own.

Be Present
Make the most of our opportunity to be here in person together.

Embrace the "Yes, And"
Play with ideas. See where they can go.

Take Care of Yourself
Hydrate, stand, move. You'll bring your best self if you do what you need to do to be engaged.

Share the Air
Help us to promote equal air time and dialogue among Commissioners.

November 13th - 14th, 2025 Goals

Discover: Looking Out

Learn from high-performing systems, both globally and in similar states, to surface innovations

Discover: Looking In

Identify strengths and opportunities in Montana through panelists and experts

Design

**Reaffirm our core vision
Articulate desired improvements
Prioritize specific improvements**

Let's Connect...

If the commission were to make its recommendations today, what is one improvement to the education system that would be your "must have" in the report? Why?

Roadshow Review

Purpose: Finalizing our review of stakeholder feedback

We asked for four types of input

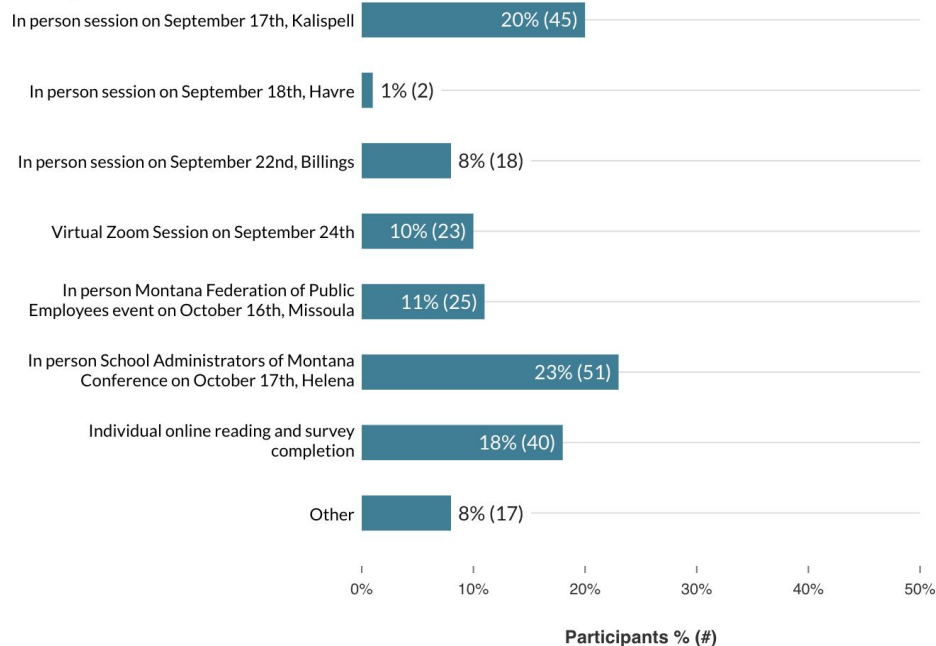|	
Demographic Survey	Where are you from, and what roles do you hold?
Student Skills Thought Exchange	What skills do young people need to succeed in this world?
System Design Thought Exchange	What must the system prioritize to prepare young people with these skills?
Exit Survey*	What thoughts do you have to share about the system's priorities and about funding?

Where participants came from

Which Counties?

Cascade	70	30%
Flathead	45	19%
Lewis and Clark	24	10%
Yellowstone	21	9%
Missoula	18	8%
Gallatin	11	5%
Big Horn	5	2%
Ravalli	5	2%
Beaverhead	4	2%
Chouteau	4	2%
Lake	4	2%
Silver Bow	4	2%
Roosevelt	3	1%

Which Roadshow?

Answered: 221 | Not answered: 29 ⑦

In person session on September 17th, Kalispell	20% (45)
In person session on September 18th, Havre	1% (2)
In person session on September 22nd, Billings	8% (18)
Virtual Zoom Session on September 24th	10% (23)
In person Montana Federation of Public Employees event on October 16th, Missoula	11% (25)
In person School Administrators of Montana Conference on October 17th, Helena	23% (51)
Individual online reading and survey completion	18% (40)
Other	8% (17)

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

Participants % (#)

10

Opening Survey Spotlights

49%   **Agree that Montana's education system centers the needs of students.**

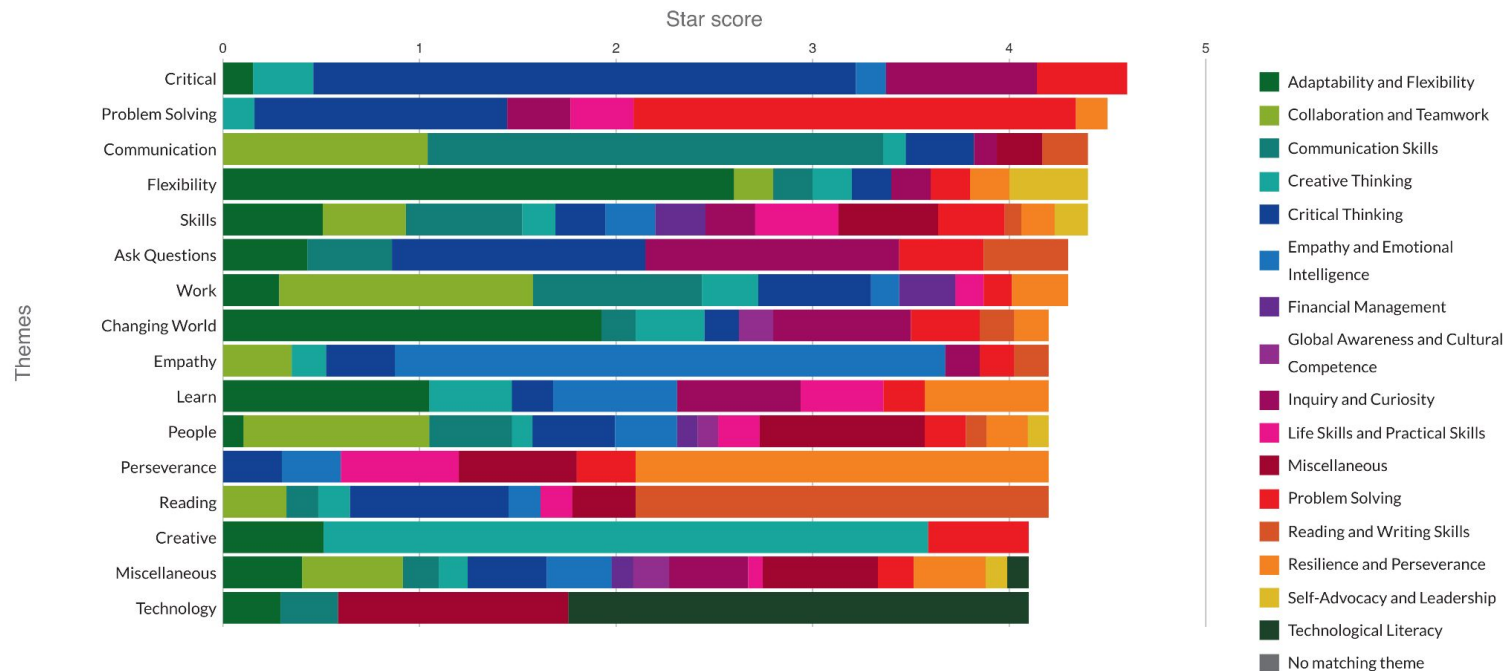**59%**   **Agree that Montana's school system is preparing its graduates for the future.**

❖ What are the skills that you believe Montana's young people will most need to thrive?

Critical thinking & problem solving remain the highest ranking themes

Critical Thinking: 4.5: 26 thoughts shared   Reading   4.2: 22 thoughts shared

What Do Young People Need to Thrive Now and in The Future?

Core Skills
Students exhibiting their learning and growth against high academic standards on an ongoing/daily basis.

Habits of Learning and Well-Being
Students develop an understanding of the power of learning and acquire skills that allow them to contribute to their own well-being and life satisfaction.
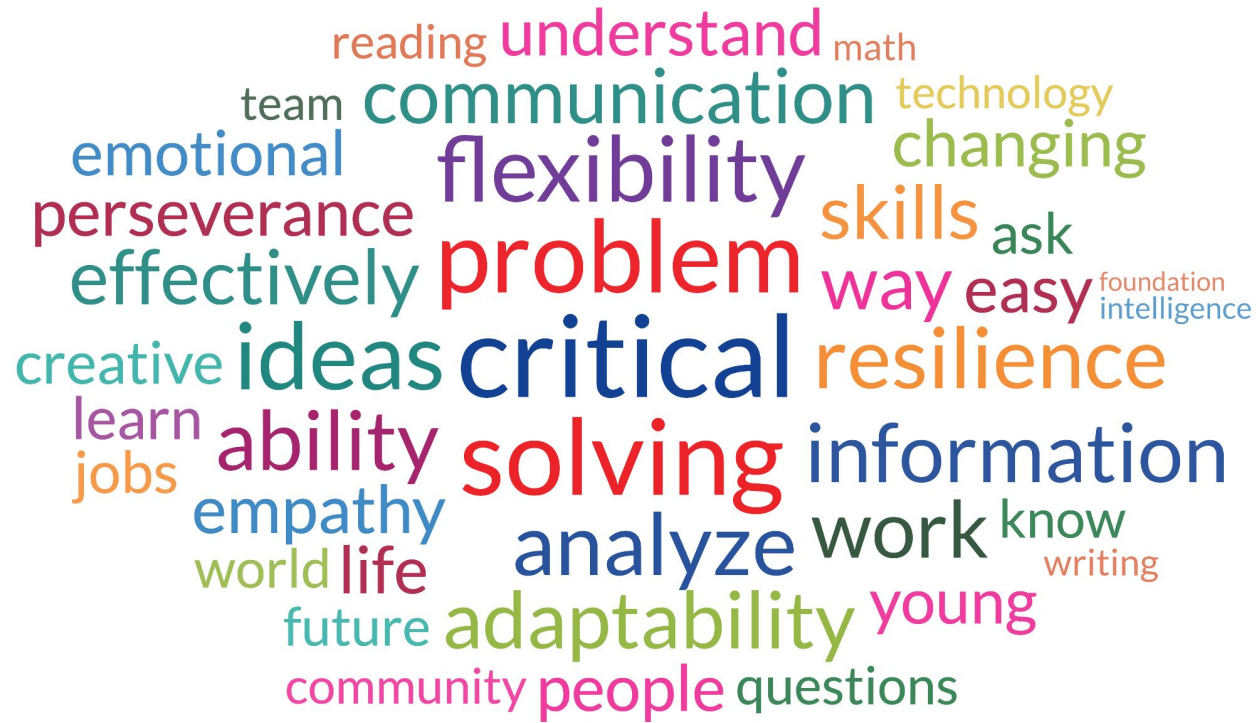
Contemporary Skills
Students develop skills connected with future career success such as communication, collaboration, creative thinking, adaptive reasoning, the ability to stare down and learn from failure.

Community Skills
Students develop skills that enable them to contribute beyond themselves such as personal and civic responsibility, seeking out the perspectives of others, courage, curiosity, respect, fairness, compassion.

14

What Do Young People Need to Thrive Now and in The Future?

What Do Young People Need to Thrive Now and in The Future?

Core Skills
Students exhibiting their learning and growth against high academic standards on an ongoing/daily basis.

4 **Problem Solving Skills**

Problem solving is regarded as vital for dealing with real-world challenges and promoting innovation. Participants highlight the need for students to think critically and creatively to address complex issues. This skill is perceived as applicable across different contexts, empowering youth to become self-starters and proactive learners. There's a significant focus on integrating problem solving within educational curricula to prepare students for dynamic career paths. The ability to solve problems is seen as fostering independence and enabling students to craft meaningful solutions in various spheres of life.

Show references

Roadshow participants' responses focus on problem solving, but integrate problem solving within educational curricula to prepare students for dynamic career paths

What Do Young People Need to Thrive Now and in The Future?

Habits of Learning and Well-Being
Students develop an understanding of the power of learning and acquire skills that allow them to contribute to their own well-being and life satisfaction.

1 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is mentioned by participants as a crucial skill needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world. It encompasses the ability to analyze information, solve problems, and make informed decisions. Participants perceive it as essential for distinguishing fact from fiction in a world overloaded with information. Many responses consider critical thinking foundational for other skills such as empathy and innovation. The emphasis on critical thinking reflects a belief in its role as a pillar for lifelong learning and adaptability.

Show references

3 Resilience and Adaptability

Resilience and adaptability are frequently mentioned as key attributes for thriving in a rapidly changing world. Participants emphasize the need for young individuals to develop grit, persevere through challenges, and remain hopeful about the future. The perception is that resilience supports emotional and mental health by cultivating a mindset that welcomes failure as a learning opportunity. Adaptability is underscored as critical, allowing students to adjust to new environments and overcome obstacles effectively. Together, these traits are seen as essential in building a foundation for success and longevity in various life pursuits.

Show references

What Do Young People Need to Thrive Now and in The Future?

Contemporary Skills
Students develop skills connected with future career success such as communication, collaboration, creative thinking, adaptive reasoning, the ability to stare down and learn from failure.

2 Communication Skills

Communication skills are highlighted as fundamental to personal and professional success. These skills range from verbal and written communication to effective interpersonal interactions. Participants stress the importance of being able to clearly articulate thoughts and ideas, as well as the ability to work collaboratively in various settings. Communication is perceived as a skill that bridges other competencies, helping students to build relationships and effectively convey their perspectives. Given the prevalence of digital media, enhancing personal communication skills is seen as increasingly vital.

Show references

What Do Young People Need to Thrive Now and in The Future?

Community Skills
Students develop skills that enable them to contribute beyond themselves such as personal and civic responsibility, seeking out the perspectives of others, courage, curiosity, respect, fairness, compassion.

5 Empathy and Emotional Skills

Empathy and emotional skills are viewed as essential for fostering strong communities and cultivating interpersonal relationships. Participants discuss the importance of emotional literacy in managing emotions, developing empathy, and understanding multiple perspectives. Empathy is perceived as a tool for cultural competence and a driver for social harmony within diverse environments. Promoting emotional skills among young people is considered crucial for nurturing a sense of shared humanity and integrating compassion within personal interactions. Developing such skills is seen as instrumental in navigating social dynamics and building a supportive network.

Show references

Tensions between soft and hard skills are resolved by prioritizing adaptability

Durable Skills

Empathy and Communication

Adaptability

Technical and Literacy Skills

"Hard" Skills
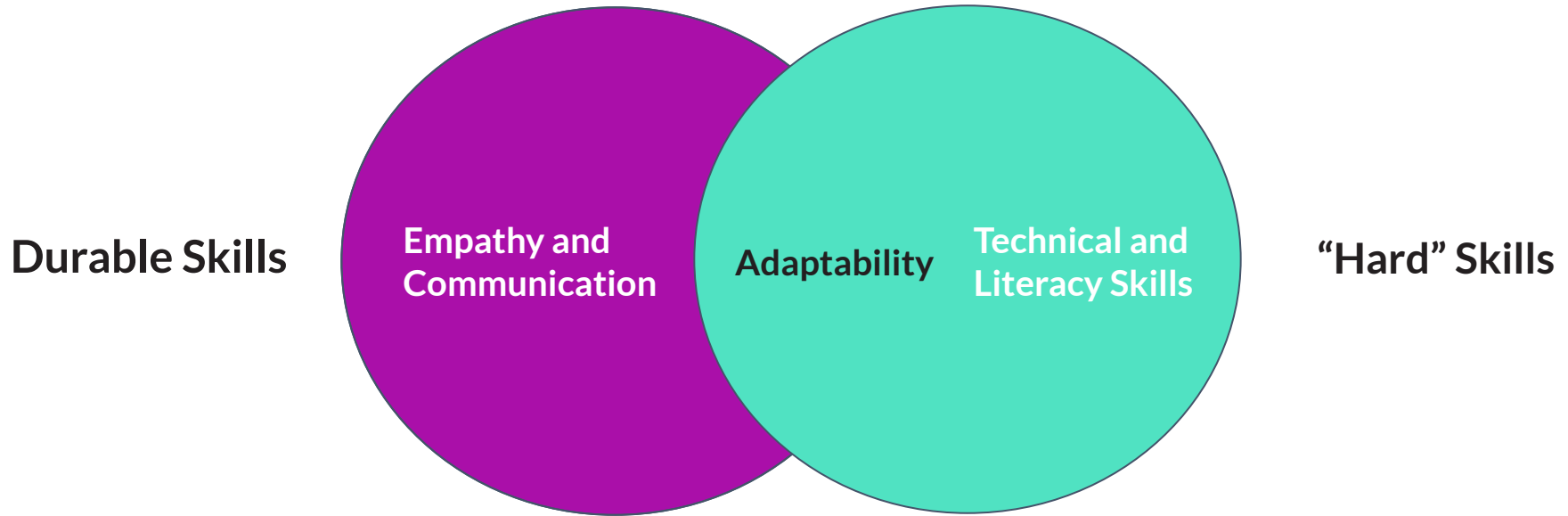
Revisiting your priorities for students from meeting 1

Academic Skills & Standards

- Strict standards on increasing proficiency in grades 1-3 (50% or 80%)
- Graduating seniors have to place into credit bearing classes
- Increasing math requirements to 3 years
- Fundamental knowledge of history and civics/citizenship

Life Skills & Practical Knowledge

- Skills for daily living, checkbook, oil, tire
- Critical thinking and financial literacy
- Prepared to function as an American citizen
- College or CTE - need to be ready

Cognitive & Problem-Solving Abilities

- Problem solving skills
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Know how they will use basic skills

Social-Emotional Development
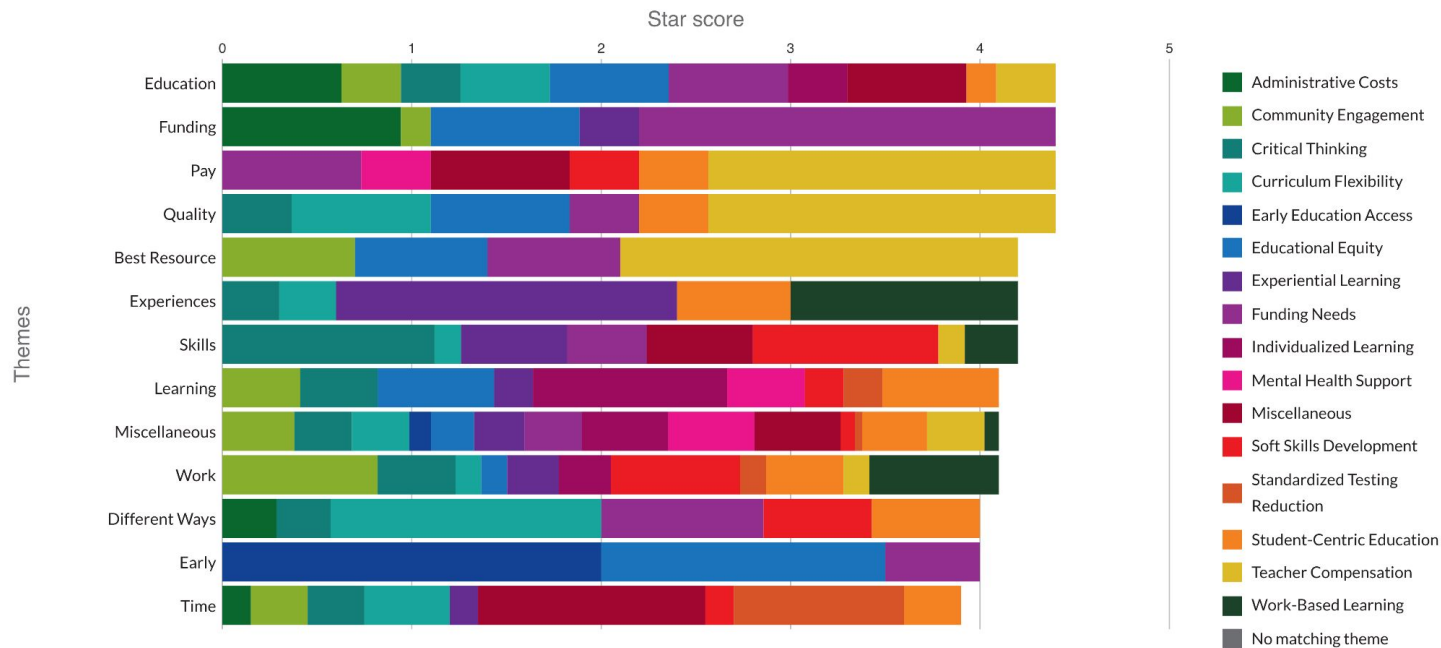
- Social skills → cooperation, conflict resolution, responsibility to a group
- Resiliency
- Motivation and initiative
- Self awareness/worth
- Sense that they are building their own identity/take ownership of
- Confident to enter adulthood "anxious generation"

◆ What should Montana's education system prioritize to best prepare our students to be ready for the world they are facing?

Funding and educator pay are the highest ranked themes

Star score

Themes: Education, Funding, Pay, Quality, Best Resource, Experiences, Skills, Learning, Miscellaneous, Work, Different Ways, Early, Time

Legend:
- Administrative Costs
- Community Engagement
- Critical Thinking
- Curriculum Flexibility
- Early Education Access
- Educational Equity
- Experiential Learning
- Funding Needs
- Individualized Learning
- Mental Health Support
- Miscellaneous
- Soft Skills Development
- Standardized Testing Reduction
- Student-Centric Education
- Teacher Compensation
- Work-Based Learning
- No matching theme

Funding: 4.4: 12 thoughts shared   Pay   4.4: 11 thoughts shared

#1 →Teacher support

1 **Teacher Support**

Teacher support emerged as a key focus area among the participants, highlighting various aspects, such as improving teacher pay, providing training and development opportunities, and reducing workload. Many responses pointed out a strong need for better salaries to attract and retain high-quality educators, enabling them to deliver quality education and positively impact student outcomes. Several participants emphasized the importance of ongoing professional growth and adequate support systems, to ensure teachers can adapt to evolving educational demands and cater effectively to student needs. The perception is that without sufficient support, teachers are unable to perform at their best, affecting overall education quality in Montana. Improving educator conditions is perceived as essential to nurturing an effective learning environment and enhancing student success.

Show references

#2→Funding

2 Funding

Funding is universally seen as a critical element in shaping Montana's education system, highlighting the urgency to secure adequate resources for schools. Participants expressed concerns about inadequate funding affecting the quality of education, emphasizing the need for a consistent and equitable approach to fund allocation. There is an overwhelming consensus that robust financial support is needed to ensure schools can implement innovative learning opportunities, maintain facilities, and offer diverse programs catering to student needs. Many responses also suggested funding should be directed towards areas that can drive impactful change, rather than standardized processes that limit flexibility. Overall, the perception is that better funding will enable schools to develop programs that are responsive to the challenges students face and to foster environments where educators and students can thrive.

Show references

#3→Providing students with flexible learning approaches

3 Flexible Learning

Flexible learning approaches were highlighted as crucial for catering to the diverse needs and potential of students. Participants stressed the importance of adapting teaching methods and learning experiences to accommodate different learning styles and readiness levels, ensuring no student is left behind. Many responses advocated for reducing rigid standardized testing and exploring personalized or competency-based education frameworks. The perception is that schools need to embrace flexibility to provide opportunities that align with students' interests and future readiness, thereby facilitating engagement and a deeper understanding of subjects. Feedback suggests that embracing flexibility in learning can cultivate an educational ecosystem that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning among students in Montana.

Show references

#4→Providing individualized learning tailored to learners

4 Real-world Experiences

Integrating real-world experiences into the education system was seen as fundamental to preparing students for life beyond school. Responses emphasized the need for work-based learning, internships, and hands-on experiences that connect classroom learning to future career paths. Participants believe that practical exposures can significantly enhance students' understanding of subjects and develop essential skills such as communication, problem-solving, and resilience. By providing students with opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, schools can better prepare them for the workforce and civic duties. Overall, engaging students with experiential learning is perceived as vital for producing well-rounded individuals ready to navigate challenges in their personal and professional lives.

Show references

#5→Community Engagement

5 Community Engagement

Community engagement was seen as pivotal in creating a supportive and enriching educational environment. Participants highlighted the importance of involving parents, local businesses, and community leaders in the education process to foster a collaborative ecosystem. Several responses emphasized that community involvement can provide additional resources, mentorship, and real-world learning opportunities to students, enhancing their educational experiences. There is a perception that schools functioning as community hubs can break down barriers, promote inclusivity, and create pathways for diverse learning experiences. Feedback suggests that strong community ties contribute to the overall success of students and educators, emphasizing a collective effort to support Montana's educational objectives.

Show references

What do the educators think about skills?

Thought exchange summary

The recurrent themes include critical thinking, adaptability, and resilience to navigate a dynamic environment. Others:

- Effective communication, both verbal and written, and technology literacy to keep pace with advancements.
- Social skills such as empathy and collaboration are crucial for working in diverse environments.
- Analytical and problem-solving abilities, along with a strong work ethic and motivation to learn, are recognized as essential

Themes

Critical Thinking

Adaptability & Resilience

Communication & Collaboration

Technology Literacy

Creative Problem Solving

What do the educators think about the system?

Thought exchange summary

Montana's education system needs to focus on comprehensive reforms that prioritize equitable funding and support for teachers, technology integration, and real-world training. Suggestions include:

- Ensuring adequate funding models to cover basic costs,
- Enhancing teacher preparation and professional development, and
- Supporting staff with livable wages.
- Local control and community involvement to tailor educational experiences.
- Flexible and collaborative learning approaches. Addressing mental health and nutritional needs

Themes

Funding

Local Control

Teacher Support

Community Support

Early Childhood Education

Funding Questions

73%   **I understand how my personal taxpayer investments and my community's tax investments in public education are being spent**

12%   **Montana's educational needs CAN be met at the current level of funding if officials can allocate funds efficiently and flexibly**

What is your current thinking about:

- **The skills students need?**
- **The system that serves them?**

Affirming our North Star

Purpose: Consider the intersection of Roadshow and Commissioner ideas with statewide Learner Profile trends

Montana's Graduate Profiles

- Julie Murgel, Chief Operating Officer
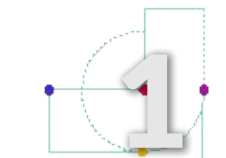
- Krystal Smith, Education Innovation Manager

Connecting Policy to the Blueprint

Purpose: Understanding our starting point (con't from October)

NCEE

BLUEPRINT

Designing Systems That Work

1 Prepare young people for long-life learning.

2 Cultivate high-capacity, forward thinking educators.

3 Join forces to ensure learners thrive.

4 Think differently about system leadership.

2 Cultivate high-capacity, forward-thinking educators

- **Valued, supported profession**

- **Ongoing learning/career advancement**

- **Evolving roles & competencies**

- **Time, space, staffing reimagined**

- **Collaborative school culture**

Cultivate High-Capacity, Forward-Leaning Educators

Part One: Commit to a virtuous cycle of educator workforce policy

- **Recruit top talent**

- **Prepare teachers and leaders to thrive**

- **Invest in ongoing learning and career advancement for educators & leaders**

Part Two: ...while addressing evolving skills and capacities

- **Expand educator competencies**

- **Reimagine time, space, staffing**

- **Foster collaborative school culture**

Thinking Differently about **Support for Teachers**

- Teachers are well-prepared in content and pedagogy.

- Teachers have high-quality instructional resources for math.

- There is significant time allocated for professional learning and collaboration.

Benchmark Examples

Recruiting and preparing future-ready educators

Notable educator networks in the state include:

- Montana Federation of Public Employees,
- Montana Professional Teaching Foundation,
- Aspiring Educators,
- Montana Association for the Education of Young Children,
- Montana State Music Teachers Association

OPI's **Professional Educator Preparation Program Standards** guide the accreditation of educator preparation programs in Montana. There are **10 post-secondary campuses that offer teacher education programs** throughout the state.

SB 373, passed in 2023, **established and approved requirements** for alternative educator preparation program providers. The **first and only** alternative program approved in Montana is the **American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence.**

While ABCTE collects candidate performance data, there are currently **no educator preparation program data dashboards available.**

Montana Examples

Cultivate High-Capacity, Forward-Thinking Educators

3 Join forces to ensure learners thrive

- **Meet students where they are**

- **Support well-being & belonging**

- **Rethink relationship between formal and informal learning**

- **Engage families and communities**

- **Work at the intersections**

Part 1: Support all students to flourish

- **Meet students where they are.**

- **Engage families to support student learning & belonging.**

- **Support student engagement & well-being.**

- **Rethink relationship between formal and informal learning.**

Part 2: Work at the intersections

- **Foster cross-sector & cross-agency collaboration.**

- **Support families and children from the start.**

- **Provide high-quality childcare.**

- **Engage families and communities.**

Thinking Differently about
Personalization & Local Assets

- Learning is organized around stages rather than grades to allow more flexibility.

- Systems set aside unassigned time for flexible use.

- Time for community based supports are incorporated into schedules for students who need it.

- Students are given opportunities for community-based learning experiences that fit their needs.

Benchmark Examples

Fostering cross-sector collaboration in support of youth and families

🔗 **SB 278** establishes the role of **"Advanced Opportunity Facilitators"** who coordinate between the district, students, families, postsecondary institutions, employers, industry associations, and community organizations **to provide advanced educational opportunities that enhance students' postsecondary career and educational success**.

🔗 Montana has created a **Post Secondary Outcomes** tool to assist decision-making for Montana students and families by evaluating outcomes from Montana's colleges, universities, and other post-secondary institutions, **including data on employment rates and earnings**.

🔗 The **Montana Budget and Policy Center** provides a detailed analysis and landscape overview of out-of-school learning time for students. While some funded out-of-school programs, largely funded through **21st Century Community Learning Grants,** offer STEM, arts, literacy, and physical activity education through after-school and summer initiatives, **more than half of Montana parents report cost as the biggest challenge to accessing after-school programs.** For Montana's American Indian population, families report challenges finding culturally inclusive programs.

> **Montana Examples**

Join Forces to Ensure Learners Thrive

Panel 1: Montana's Students

- Compare and contrast your graduate profile and the state composite profile
- Do you think you will be future ready if you have the qualities named in the graduate profile? Why or why not?
  - What would you add?
  - What kinds of experiences will you need inside and outside of school to develop these competencies?

- **Dalton Howser, Kalispell Public Schools**
- **Nikita Kiner, Savage Public Schools**
- **Bridger Muri, Miles City Public Schools**

Reflection
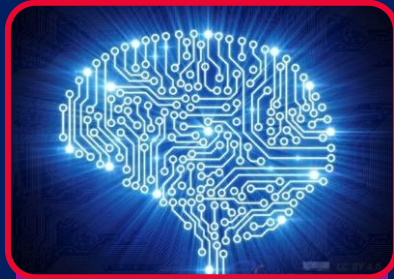
- What is one idea from our panelists that you are mulling over?
- How are their reflections & experiences informing your thinking?

Montana's State Policy Context: Guiding Questions

How will Commission recommendations, if implemented, function in a local control context?
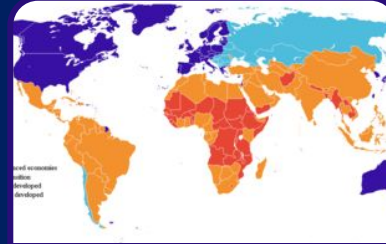
What are the necessary conditions and capacities for district and school success in a local control state?

An Inclusive, Future-Facing & Systemic Approach

The systems that outperform the U.S. and are **rapidly innovating and improving** post-pandemic all have centralized, cross-cutting (bipartisan, bicameral, cross-agency) structures for:

→ Setting a jurisdiction-wide vision

→ Linking education to economic goals

→ Floating above partisan politics

→ Focusing on the **far future prosperity** of the jurisdiction

→ Examining who is "at the table" and exploring how power is shared and change is sustained

→ And so, intentionally involving **and empowering** educators, youth, and communities in decision-making

5 P's for Local Control Policies

Prohibit

Disallows an action by statute

Permit

Allowed, but often comes with requirements.

(application process, etc.)

Promote

Incentivized by the state; "carrot" approach

Promise

Guaranteed by the state; The policy intent can be carried out with minimal burdens,

Prescribe

Mandated by federal or state law; compliance structures exist

This "permission structure" for policy can help explain different levers

How do Montana's current **High Capacity Educator and Joining Forces policies** map to these categories?

Digital Access: https://bit.ly/4oljii3

1. Review the worksheets for high capacity educators and joining forces.
2. Determine in your small group what category each belongs in
3. After you categorize the policies, consider:
   a. Reporting mandates
   b. Trade-offs
   c. Incentives (funding, policy waivers)
4. How might LEAs react to your categorizations? Would LEA size, urban/rural lens change their reactions?

Debrief

What conversations were inspired by this exercise?

What questions or ideas do you want the team to bear in mind while developing its recommendations and implementation plan?

Policy Levers That Can Move Systems

Purpose: Translating high performing system "moves" to domestic policy levers.

NCEE Policy Levers:

- **are** specific, actionable policy recommendations

- **are** context-aware and flexible

- **offer** strategic shifts and starting points

- **are** targeted and Blueprint-aligned

Our levers are intended for use by two key types of leaders

Policymakers: accelerate the adoption of new future - forward policy by learning from others and focusing on conditions

System leaders: accelerate implementation by learning from other jurisdictions and adopting tools

State Policy Levers to Cultivate High Capacity, Forward-Thinking Educators

Redesign teacher preparation to be competency-based and practice-embedded

Establish clear and consistent criteria for high-quality induction and mentoring systems

Incentivize educator leadership and personalized, competency-based practice

Launch digital systems to track educator growth and career pathways

Expand distributed leadership and team-based professional learning

Build flexible pathways for industry professionals to enter the educator workforce

Redesign teacher preparation to be competency-based and practice-embedded

Utah adopted new 2025 Teacher Preparation competencies, launched new Educator Preparation Program (EPP) reviews, and is scaling microcredential-based PD across disciplines.

The state is expanding microcredential-based professional development across disciplines, rolling out scalable content-specific pathways (like mathematics and science coaching), content-endorsement stacks, and badges through its statewide platform, to integrate competency-based PD into initial licensure, ongoing training, and license renewal.

British Columbia (Canada) restructured teacher prep to align with a redesigned curriculum through collaboration between universities and practicing teachers.

Universities collaborated closely with teachers to make courses and tools relevant to the new curriculum design.

Estonia updates teacher prep frameworks every 5 years and enables 50% of teachers to gain credentials while actively teaching.

Recent priorities included better supporting candidates in their practicum and requiring teachers to specialize in at least two subjects to better develop cross-cutting competencies.

Establish clear and consistent criteria for high-quality induction and mentoring systems

In 2022, **New Mexico** enhanced its teacher residency program to improve support, increase stipends, and promote diversity among candidates.

New Mexico expanded its teacher residency program, which ensures/mandates that aspiring teachers complete at least one year of residency before certification. The new legislation raised stipends for teacher residents, introduced stricter selection criteria, and provided professional development for mentor teachers.

Delaware: All new teachers participate in a multi-year induction program with trained mentors and leadership roles embedded in state policy. 4-year induction program

The program's goals are to improve educator retention, enhance professional practice, support growth and reflection, and ultimately elevate student outcomes, with defined responsibilities at both state and local levels to guide coaches, coordinators, school leaders, and new educators.

Estonia standardized mentor training through universities and provides yearlong induction support for new teachers.

The two main teacher preparation institutions collaborated to design a unified training program for teacher mentors, ensuring consistent quality across the country. All mentors working with new teachers are trained through this program, creating a shared foundation of skills and expectations. Once in schools, new teachers receive a full year of structured induction support from a trained mentor.

Incentivize educator leadership and personalized, competency-based practice

Allegheny County, PA is working with educators and officials to redesign its early childhood system, focusing on smoother transitions to K–12 and a stronger ECE workforce.

Educators, administrators, and principals are working alongside district and state leaders to conduct a detailed benchmarking process that maps out the current landscape, evaluates strengths and challenges, and identifies areas for impactful change. Importantly, educators are not only helping shape this vision, but will also play a central role in putting it into action.

New Mexico launched a Career Lattice and wage subsidy program to support and retain early childhood educators through clear advancement paths and higher pay.

The lattice includes six levels based on specific credentials and core competencies. Once educators earn a certificate or associate's degree, they can pursue one of three specialized pathways: teacher, program administrator, or infant family studies. As they gain experience, their wages increase accordingly. To ensure competitive compensation, the state's Early Childhood Education and Care Department established a grant program funded by two permanent revenue sources, helping providers raise wages from a median of $9.66 per hour to between $15 and $23 per hour.

New South Wales, Australia launched free, self-paced online PD for early educators with a leadership track rolling out in 2025.

The New South Wales Department of Education is partnering with TAFE, an Australian CTE provider, to provide the free program to every ECE educator.

Expand distributed leadership and team-based professional learning

Long Beach, CA collaborates with CSU Long Beach to align teacher preparation and induction with district priorities.

Long Beach has established a partnership with California State University, Long Beach to create a seamless connection between clinical teacher preparation, induction programs, and the specific needs of the school district. This collaboration ensures that teacher candidates receive practical, district-relevant training and support during their transition into the profession, enhancing teacher readiness and retention while addressing local educational goals.

In **Finland**, to support efforts in leading change, the government gives autonomy to school principals and encourages bottom-up innovation through a distributed leadership model.

Rather than relying on centralized control, the Finnish education system is designed to function on trust, granting schools and municipalities significant autonomy. Principals are therefore empowered to lead pedagogical changes that reflect local needs and values, supported by collaboration with teachers and local education authorities. The system allows principals to manage their schools' budgets, staffing, and curriculum adaptations to align with the national core framework while meeting the needs of their communities.

Build flexible pathways for industry professionals to enter the educator workforce

New Jersey's alternative teaching route allows CTE teaching candidates to establish their eligibility through a combination of verified employment and formal education experiences.

Teachers are then hired by school districts on a provisional license, complete a minimum of 50 hours of teacher training, and participate in a school-based training program to earn their full teaching credential.

Launch digital systems to track educator growth and career pathways

Boston Public Schools uses a market-based platform to track educator growth

BPS' evaluation and professional development (PD) platform. Currently, teachers, administrators, and some managerial employees use it for evaluations. All staff can browse PD opportunities, track in-district credits or submit to host a course.

State Policy Levers to Join Forces to Ensure Learners Thrive

- Leverage cross-sector partnerships to identify and develop employability skills
- Expand access to affordable, high-quality childcare to support early readiness
- Leverage tax incentives and abatements to catalyze employer engagement and upskilling initiatives
- Create regional career-connected learning hubs to leverage partnerships and technology that bridge education and workforce system
- Integrate and coordinate community-based learning experiences and student supports

Build cross-sector partnerships to identify and develop employability skills

Switzerland students in apprenticeships take on real job responsibilities, submit final projects to industry panels, and progress to higher wages and degrees.

↓

Switzerland operates what many consider the world's most effective apprenticeship model, with over two-thirds of students pursuing paid, career-connected pathways. Students split their week between work-based learning and school, developing real skills under trained mentors while earning wages that grow with responsibility. The vocational diploma is nationally recognized and opens pathways to both employment and applied or research universities.

Singapore introduces career counseling at age 12 and offers internships, immersive experiences, and industry-designed technical education through its Institute for Technical Education and polytechnic system.

↓

Singapore's career pathway system integrates work-based learning, modular credentials, and future-oriented workforce planning through a highly centralized structure. At the Institute for Technical Education (ITE) and polytechnic institutions, students gain hands-on experience in simulated workplaces, from retail cafés to airplane hangars. Curriculum is co-designed with industry, and instructors complete regular externships to stay current.

Expand access to affordable, high-quality childcare to support early readiness

Washington, D.C. enacted pay raises to bring early childhood educator salaries in line with K–12 teachers.

This effort recognizes the critical role early educators play in child development and seeks to improve retention, recruitment, and equity within the early childhood workforce by addressing longstanding pay disparities.

Florida's VPK program offers free, flexible prekindergarten options for all four-year-olds and is piloting an accountability system to support kindergarten readiness.

Since 2005, FL has provided free, half-day preK to all 4 year-olds through its Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program. Families can choose from a school-year option, a summer program, or specialized instructional services, and they have the flexibility to enroll their child with public, private, or specialized providers.
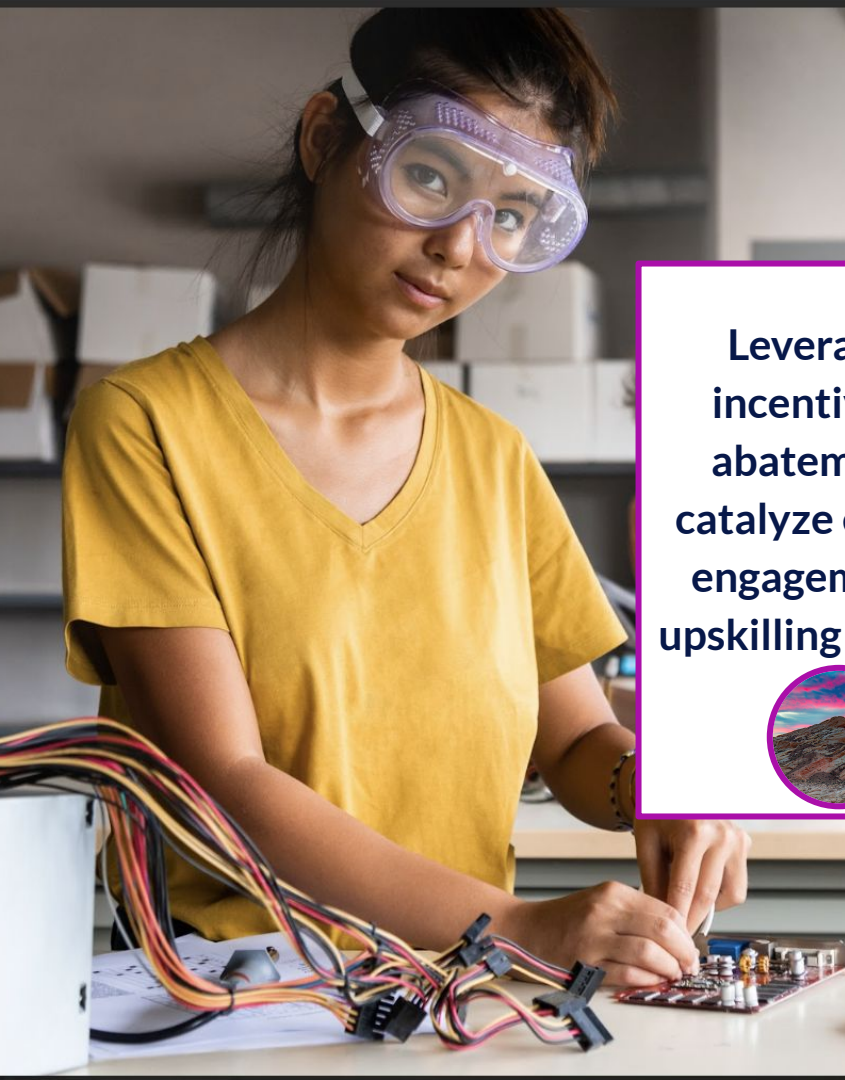
Leverage tax incentives and abatements to catalyze employer engagement and upskilling initiatives

Michigan Reconnect is a 2020 program that helps 25-year-olds without college degrees earn a two-year degree or skill certificate.

Michigan launched the Michigan Reconnect program in 2020 to support residents who are 25 years old and do not yet have a college degree. The initiative covers the costs for these individuals to pursue either a two-year degree or a skill certificate, aiming to improve their education and job prospects.

Singapore subsidizes work placements to encourage long-term employer engagement in training.

To strengthen the link between education and employment, Singapore offers subsidies for work placements, aiming to build a culture where employers take an active role in training talent. By lowering the initial cost barrier, the government incentivizes companies to host students or trainees, with the broader goal of shifting norms so that such placements become a standard, self-sustained practice.

Create regional career-connected learning hubs to leverage partnerships and technology that bridge education and workforce system

Indiana's Workforce Cabinet coordinates cross-agency career education, ensuring all high school programs include real-world learning and college connections.

Indiana created a Workforce Cabinet to oversee career education and coordinate across agencies including K-12 education, higher education and economic development. All programs for secondary students include capstone experiences with work-based learning and connections to Ivy Tech and Indiana University.

Donna ISD in Texas revamped its CTE programs to align with high-demand careers like SpaceX welding and drone piloting through strong employer partnerships.

The district restructured its career and technical education (CTE) programs to align with high-growth, high-wage jobs, including accelerated welding tracks for SpaceX careers and commercial drone pilot training,using employer partnerships to design and deliver the programs.

Integrate and coordinate community-based learning experiences and student supports

Vicksburg, MS schools collaborated with local partners to develop career academies and an entrepreneurship track that includes mentorship and student-led businesses.

The school district co-designed career pathways with local businesses and community members, including three career academies and an entrepreneurship pathway that supports student-led ventures through mentorship from civic leaders.

Minnesota's Whole Family Systems Initiative funds community-led efforts to connect early learning with broader supports for young families.

Launched in 2024, Minnesota's WFS Initiative focuses on building family-centered learning by integrating services through community-led collaboration. Funded by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, WFS provides grants to initiatives that connect education, health, housing, and economic support to reduce barriers for families with young children.

Reflecting on the Levers

● Where do you see alignment between current Montana policies and these levers/examples?

● What levers and examples seem new or novel? What insights are you taking from them?

● Which examples might help you address the system challenges you've identified?

Panel 2: Montana's Teachers

- What current Montana policies effectively support you as an educator? Consider local and state policies.
- What additional in-school tools do you need to be effective? To grow as an educator?
- What strategies or practices would help Montana attract and retain teachers?
  - What could the district do?
  - What could the state do?
- In addition to salaries, what other investments are necessary to ensure we have high capacity, forward looking educators?
- What would you like to share with the Working Group that we have not asked you about?

- **Catherine Matthews**, Elementary Educator, Hyalite ES, Bozeman SD7. 2023 Montana Teacher of the year
- **Linda Rost,** HS Science Educator, Baker Public Schools. 2020 Montana Teacher of the Year
- **Dawn Sievers,** Spanish/English/Art Educator, Power Public Schools. 2025 Montana Teacher of the Year
- **Jake Warner,** Math Educator, Helena High School, Helena SD1. Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

Reflection

- What is one idea from our panelists that you are mulling over?
- How are their reflections informing your thinking?

Day 1: Reflections

What's one thing from today you want to carry into tomorrow's recommendations conversation?

The Working Group's Charge

- To compare the education policies of Montana with the policies of high-performing international and domestic educational systems;
- To develop recommendations to adapt the appropriate education policies of high-performing education systems for the public education system in Montana;
- To develop an implementation plan for the recommendations; and
- To publish its recommendations and implementation plan no later than January 30, 2026.

Our Timeline: August 2025 - January 2026

Mid-Aug through Mid-Sept	September	October	November-December	January
1:1 calls between NCEE and WG Members	Sept15-16 WG Session 1 Sept 17-22 Roadshow Round 1	Oct 14-15 WG Session 2 Oct 16-17 Roadshow Round 2	Nov 13-14 WG Session 3 Dec 15 WG Session 4	Jan 13 WG Session 5
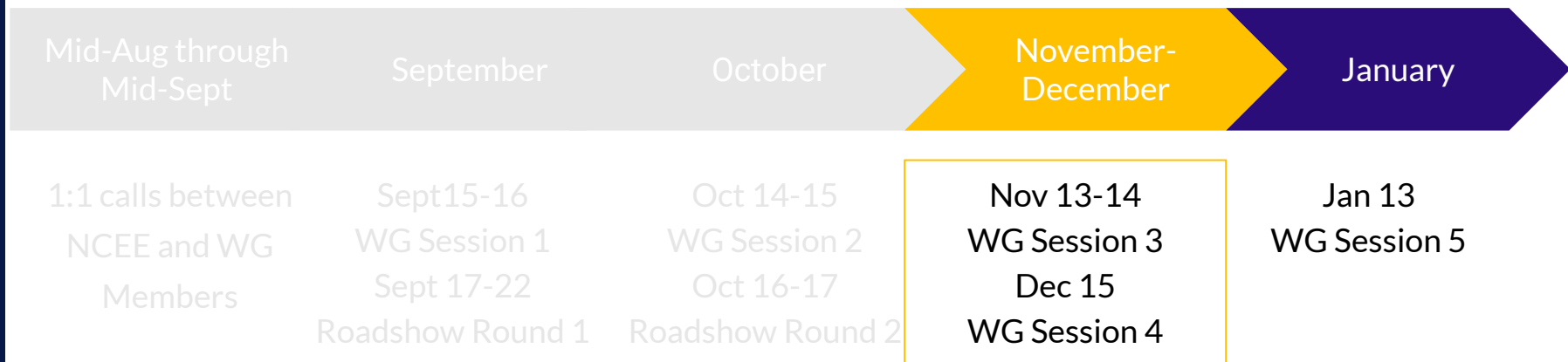
NCEE's role

Engage parents, educators and the public in shared learning
Seek inspiration for goals for Montana's best possible education system
Build shared ownership by using similar learning experiences

Commissioner roles

Serve as community ambassadors
Spread the word to constituents about the Roadshow opportunity

Our Commitments

Bring Your Whole Self
Your ideas, questions, stories, and lived experiences are a part of the work. Share them.

Listen to Understand
Seek curiosity. Make space for perspectives different from your own.

Be Present
Make the most of our opportunity to be here in person together.

Embrace the "Yes, And"
Play with ideas. See where they can go.

Take Care of Yourself
Hydrate, stand, move. You'll bring your best self if you do what you need to do to be engaged.

Share the Air
Help us to promote equal air time and dialogue among Commissioners.

November 13th - 14th, 2025 Goals

Discover: Looking Out

Learn from high-performing systems, both globally and in similar states, to surface innovations

Discover: Looking In

Identify strengths and opportunities in Montana through panelists and experts

Design

**Reaffirm our core vision
Articulate desired improvements
Prioritize specific improvements**

Montana's Mandate:

Article X makes clear our intention for Montana

ARTICLE X
EDUCATION AND PUBLIC LANDS

Section 1. **EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND DUTIES.** (1) It is the goal of the p...ish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each pers... of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state.

2) The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American In... ...ommitted in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.

3) The legislature shall provide a basic system of free quality public elementary ...y schools. The legislature may provide such other educational institutions, p... ...and educational programs as it deems desirable. It shall fund and distribute in ... ...manner to the school districts the state's share of the cost of the basic elementary ...y school system.

Montana's North Star

10 most common competencies

1. Communication
2. Critical Thinking
3. Life long learners/Life Long Learning
4. Integrity
5. Citizenship/Global Citizen/Good Citizenship
6. Academic Excellence
7. Responsibility/Responsible
8. Community Minded
9. Collaborate/Collaborative
10. Resilience/Strength & Resilience

Our process to date

Look Out

- Examine the conditions that are shaping the future
- Examine the four elements of the Blueprint, derived from practices of high performing systems
- Examine policy levers used by high performing and improving systems

Look In

- Consider feedback from Montanans about the future and the education system they need
- Examine Montana policies and their fit with that future
- Listen to Montanans about policies and practices

Design

- Evaluate policies based on their design and fit with local control
- Consider new policy improvements in high leverage educational domains (e.g., ECE)

Constitutional Players' Domains and the NCEE Blueprint

Early Learning

- Pre-K to 3rd Grade
- Join forces so learners thrive

Transform Teaching

- Future Forward, High Capacity Educators
- Think Differently about System leadership

Pathways and CTE

- Prepare for long-life learning
- Join forces so learners thrive

Learner Centered Education

- Prepare for long-life learning
- Join forces so learners thrive

What if? Supposition

If the Commission addresses the four domains from the Constitutional Players...

While maintaining the Graduate Profile top 10 as a north star...

And addresses needs within the systems that link the state, counties, and local systems together...

Then the Commission will be able to articulate a vision and model for Montana's system of education that can meet the needs of today's learners and fulfill the Commission's mandate

Montana Policies

Re/considering specific policies and programs that Montanans rely on to fulfill the constitutional mandate.

The legislative staff have developed a policy crosswalk

What the crosswalk is

- A representative sample of policies and programs
- Thematically grouped according to the Constitutional Players' Domains/Themes/Buckets
- Prepopulated with known issues spotted by some of Montana's Subject Matter Experts
- Organized for small group analysis with Commissioners and Subject Matter Experts

What the crosswalk isn't

- A comprehensive catalog of all education policies in Montana
- A set of policies cherry-picked from a single source by NCEE

Policy examination process: Small Groups

Review Policies/Programs

- Develop an understanding of the policies and the issues raised in the Issues/Improvements/ Questions rows by examining with fellow commissioners and the subject matter experts in your small group and having your note-taker record changes to the crosswalk

Evaluate Issues/Improvements/ Questions

- Validate the Issue and leave it as-is
- Modify the Issue statement to better reflect the understanding & thinking of the group
- Resolve the Issue statement by either resolving questions or correcting any misunderstandings

Prioritize changes

- Rate "must resolve" Issues as **critical** - expect these to be a focus of the recommendations report
- Rate "should resolve" Issues as **important**
- Rate noncritical, but nontrivial Issues as **desirable**
- Mark non-Issues as such

Policy report out: Whole Group Synthesis

Presenting team role	Listening teams' role
A team presents one of its critical ideas for improving a policy: • What do you propose? • What is the impact? • When will benefits begin? How long will they last?	**3 other teams ask questions regarding the policy** • Does it align and support progress with the domain? • What implementation considerations need to be addressed (5p's)? • Solvency – does it address the problem? • Connections: does it help with anything on your team's list? Does it compete with anything?

# Finalize the Prioritized List of Changes

- **Critical changes:** these changes have prioritized access to resources (either current or new) so that these changes are made in a timely and effective manner.

- **Important changes:** these are the changes that should also have specific resources, but likely fewer resources than the critical changes and a less tight timeline.

- **Desirable changes:** These changes should be made with the remaining resources after prioritizing critical and important changes.
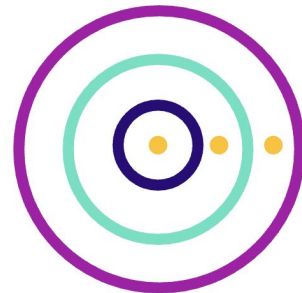
Reflection Questions

- What stood out to you the most while discussing the individual programs in your small group? Did you have additional, specific observations or draw any specific conclusions you'd like to share?

- What similarities across the four domains did you notice during the whole group synthesis? What were the most significant differences between your domain and the other domains?

- What were your key takeaways from the prioritization exercise?

- What final thoughts do you have to share with us before we work to develop a report reflecting your recommendations?

The Montana Landscape: A Funding Tutorial

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