

# Looking Ahead

Co-designing the system for Montanans



# The Case for Change

## Why Now?

- The world and workforce are changing rapidly: automation, AI, and new industries demand new skills.
- Montana's students face gaps in readiness: declining NAEP scores, disparities across income groups, and fewer entering/finishing college.
- Communities are already innovating but face challenges like childcare deserts, declining enrollment, and limited access to learning that is relevant to them.
- Our decennial funding effort can start with reimagining the system to ensure we're funding what works.



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## Key takeaways



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Do you believe Montana's education system, as it stands today, is preparing our young people for the future they will inherit? If not, what needs to change first?





# What Young People Need to Thrive

- ❑ Core academics (reading, math, history, writing) remain essential.
- ❑ Habits of learning & well-being: resilience, purpose, motivation, self-awareness.
- ❑ Contemporary skills: collaboration, critical thinking, adaptability, creativity.
- ❑ Community skills: civic responsibility, empathy, respect for Montana's heritage and other cultures.



## Key takeaways

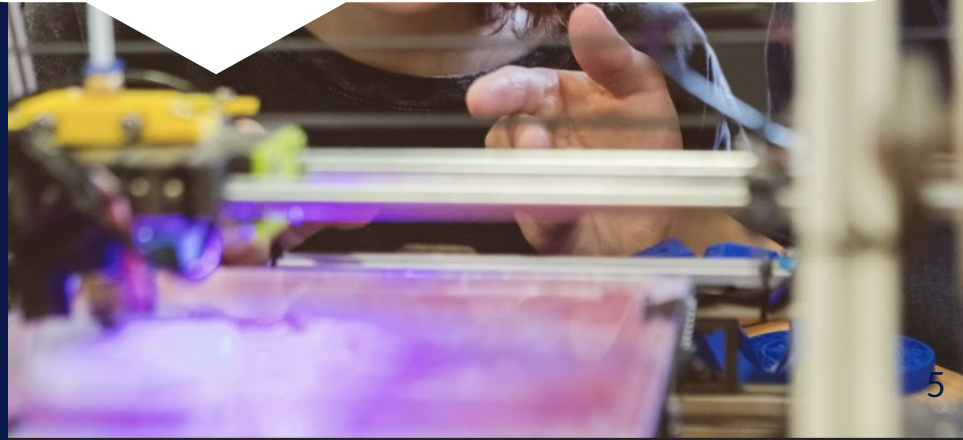


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Which of these “thrive skills” feels most urgent for Montana’s young people, and what would it take to make sure every child develops them?



## Lessons from High Performing Systems

- Strong systems connect education and economy directly.
- They work as coherent systems where pieces reinforce one another.
- They are future-focused and proactive, not reactive.
- Montana can build on strengths (community spirit, CTE programs, educator dedication) while addressing gaps (early learning access, system alignment, equity).



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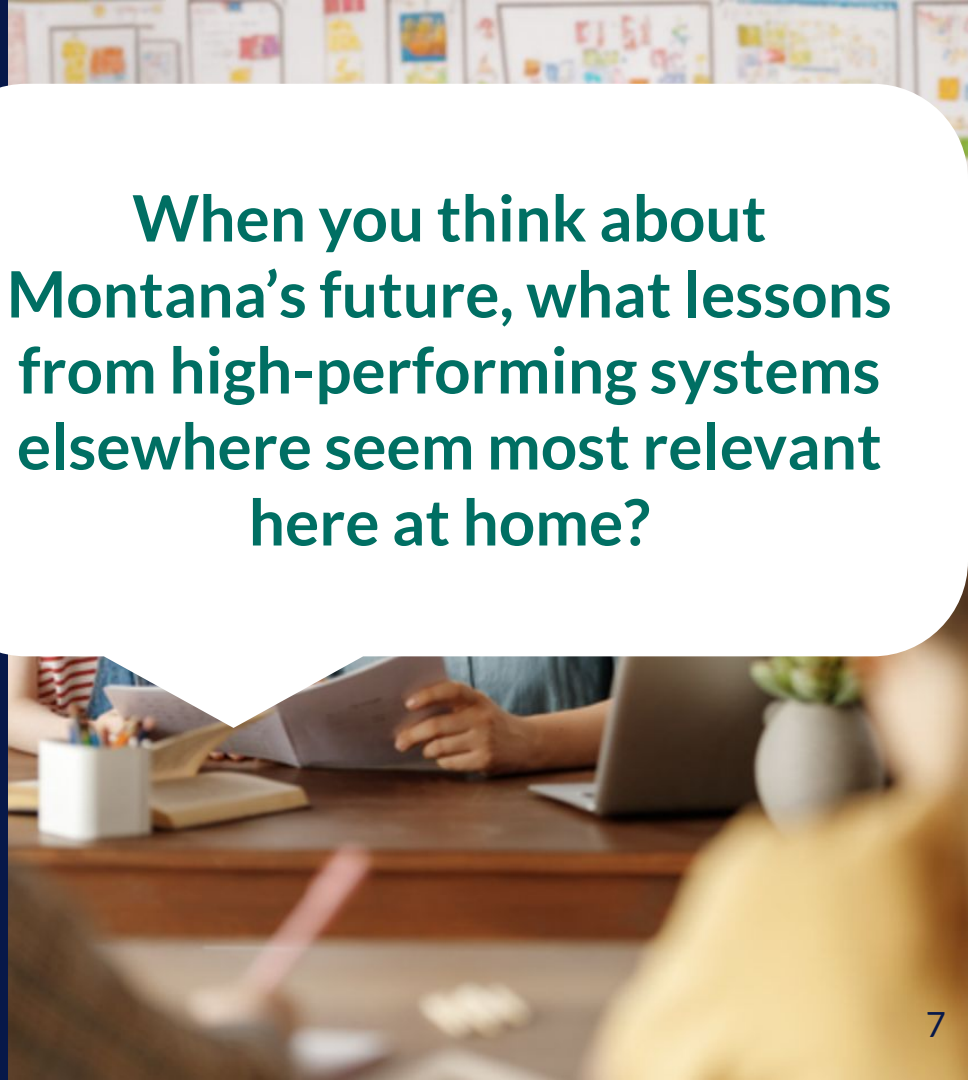


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**When you think about Montana's future, what lessons from high-performing systems elsewhere seem most relevant here at home?**







# Prepare young people for long-life learning

## Features of systems that work

1. High-quality early learning
2. Excellence through graduation
3. Meaningful on-ramps to life after school
4. Portable & modularized credentials & pathways
5. Engaging, affordable avenues for upskilling

## Probing Questions

Which of these features of systems that work are most compelling to us?

What are we listening to our constituents for?

What policy directions does this suggest are possible?





# Cultivate high-capacity, forward-thinking educators

## Features of systems that work

1. Valued, supported profession
  2. Ongoing learning/career advancement
  3. Evolving roles & competencies
  4. Time, space, staffing reimagined
  5. Collaborative school culture
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# Join forces to ensure learners thrive

## Features of systems that work

1. Meet students where they are
  2. Support well-being & belonging
  3. Rethink relationship between formal and informal learning
  4. Engage families and communities
  5. Work at the intersections
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# Think differently about system leadership

## Features of systems that work

1. Build coherence & alignment
  2. Continuously improve
  3. Revisit assumptions
  4. Broaden coalitions
  5. Benchmark against the best
  6. Be intentional & enduring
  7. Maintain a relentless focus on the future
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