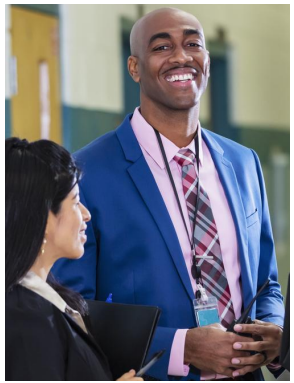










NCEE

Innovation and Excellence in Education Working Group

Montana's School Funding Interim Commission

National Center on Education and the Economy
September 15 and 16, 2025

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 will use a structured feedback loop to collect and integrate input from across Montana, ensuring many voices inform the development process.

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 and prioritized policy levers for Montana, and inform the Roadshow design

Design:

Finalize prompts for use during the Roadshow to solicit input from the public

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.

September 15-16, 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 to build on within Montana

Design:

Align around a core vision for Montana's young people and prioritized policy levers for Montana, and inform the Roadshow design

Let’s Connect…

Consider your K-12 experience (as a student), what do you carry with you? How has the experience changed for kids today? How might it have to be different 5 years from now?

Who We Are

NCEE

Non-profit
based in D.C.

At the intersection of
education & economy

35+ years connecting
global research with
national, state, &
district **policy &**
practice

We believe in

shared prosperity

robust democracy

lives of purpose and hope

What We Do

Study the highest-performing, fast-improving, most equitable education systems globally and in the U.S.

Distill insights and **identify** what is common across them

Use this **analysis** to inform our partnership work with states and districts

Our Approach

“Look out” through research to discover what top performing and rapidly improving systems do, and then “look in” to analyze their own systems against the insights.

Through a bold, bolder, and boldest framework, stakeholders imagine and scenario plan what their systems could and would do in the face of a changing future, and explore the implications for and with students, schools, and communities across the state.

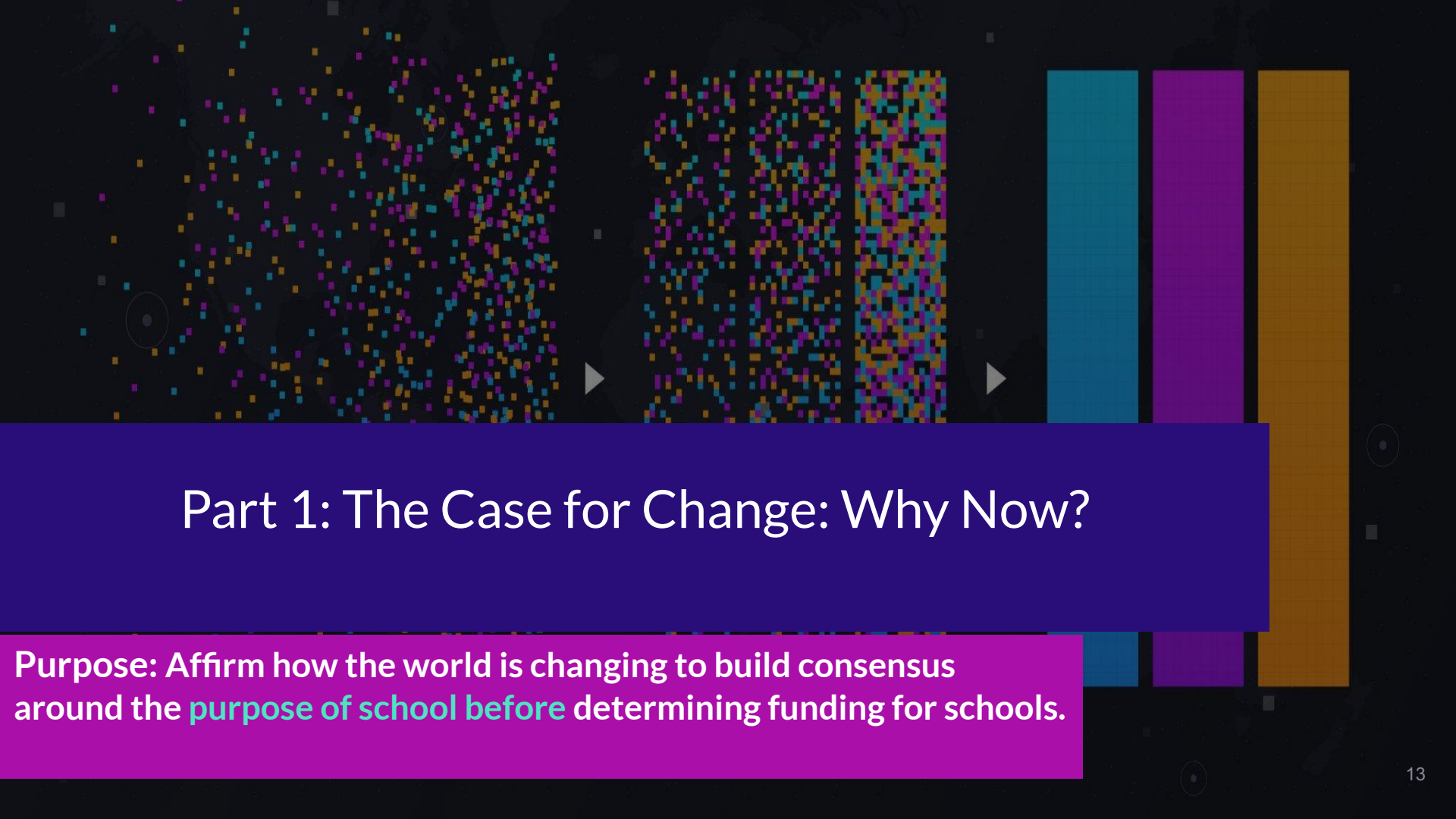
Implement new policies while building feedback loops for ongoing system design and improvement as economies, technologies, and societies continue to evolve.

Designing Future-Ready State Learning Systems

NCEE

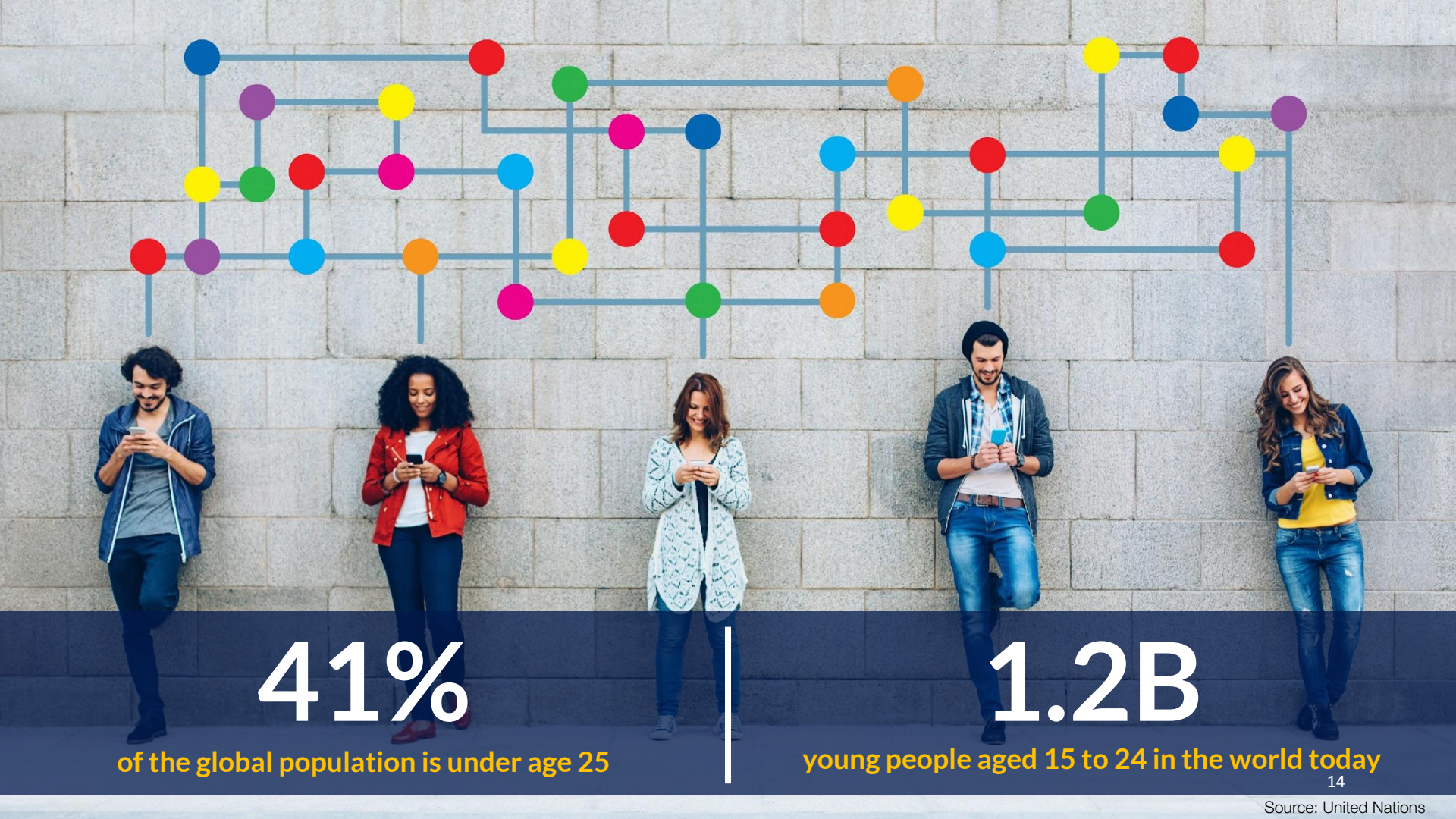
- **We work with partners to co-design a future-focused vision and strategic plan for redesigning education** for the future of learning and work, engaging groups of policymakers, practitioners, businesses, youth, and more.

- **We employ Vertical Alignment and Horizontal Alignment strategies for system transformation.** We engage education leaders and policymakers from schoolhouse to statehouse *and back*. **Horizontal alignment:** We build the field by engaging a broad array of stakeholders across all geographies and sectors.



Part 1: The Case for Change: Why Now?

Purpose: Affirm how the world is changing to build consensus around the purpose of school before determining funding for schools.



41%

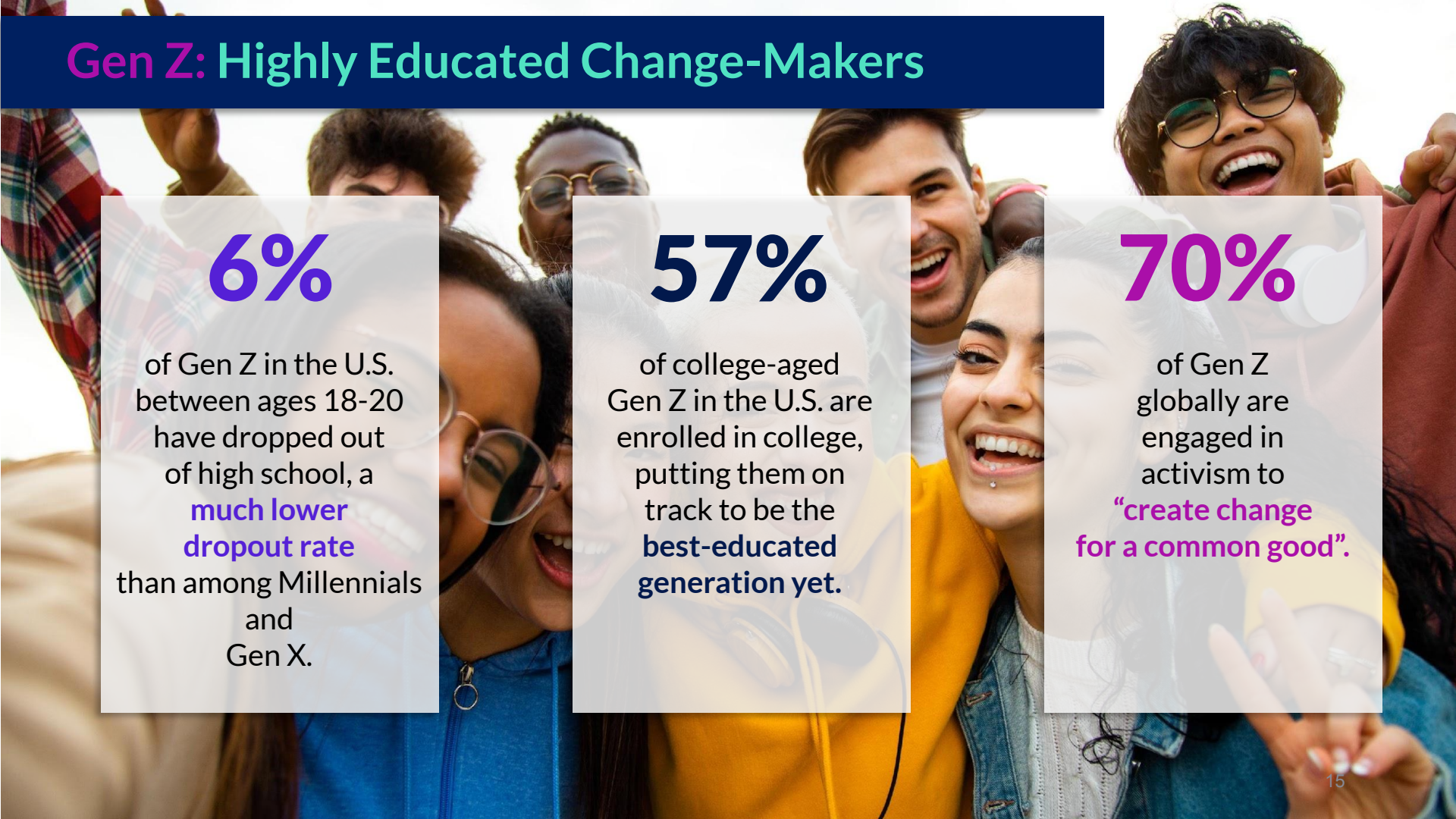
of the global population is under age 25

1.2B

young people aged 15 to 24 in the world today

Source: United Nations

Gen Z: Highly Educated Change-Makers



6%

of Gen Z in the U.S. between ages 18-20 have dropped out of high school, a **much lower dropout rate** than among Millennials and Gen X.

57%

of college-aged Gen Z in the U.S. are enrolled in college, putting them on track to be the **best-educated generation yet.**

70%

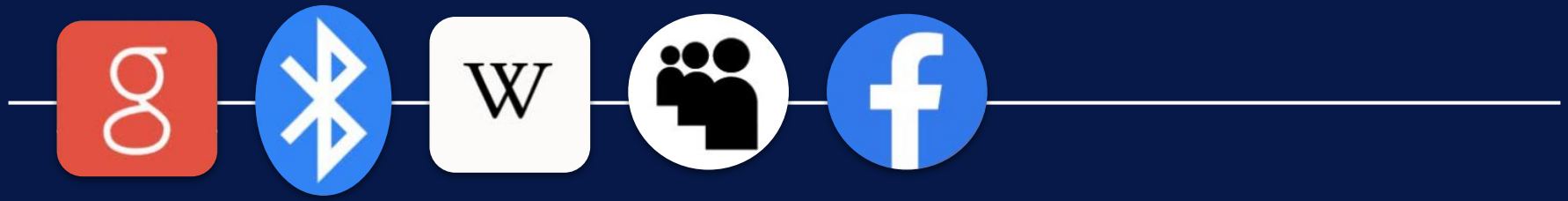
of Gen Z globally are engaged in activism to **"create change for a common good".**

What we know:
The world has **changed** for our students.

The world has changed for our students:

Post-secondary

Born between 2002–2006



Adapted from Dr. Sabba Quidwai, Designing Schools

The world has changed for our students:

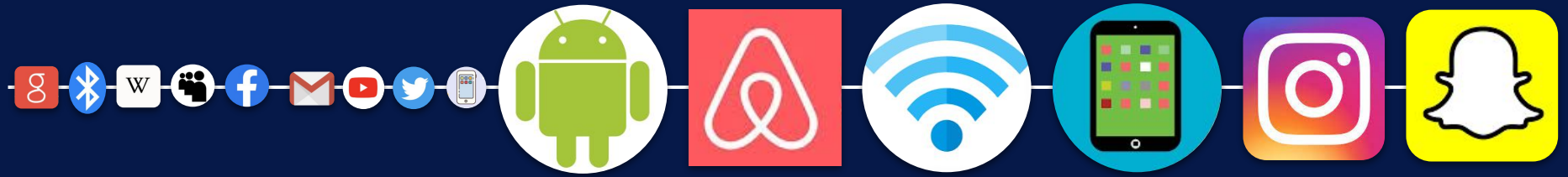
High School
Born between 2006–2011

Post-secondary
Born 2002–2006

Adapted from Dr. Sabba Quidwai, Designing Schools

The world has changed for our students:

Middle School
Born between 2011–2014



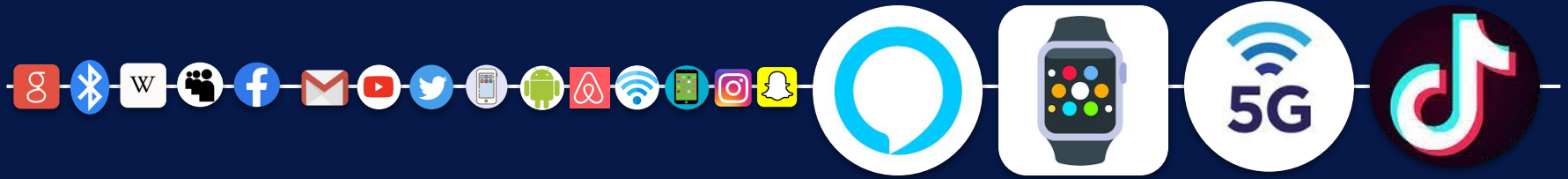
Post-secondary
Born 2002–2006

High School
Born 2006–2011

Adapted from Dr. Sabba Quidwai, Designing Schools

The world has changed for our students:

Elementary School
Born 2014–2019



Post-secondary
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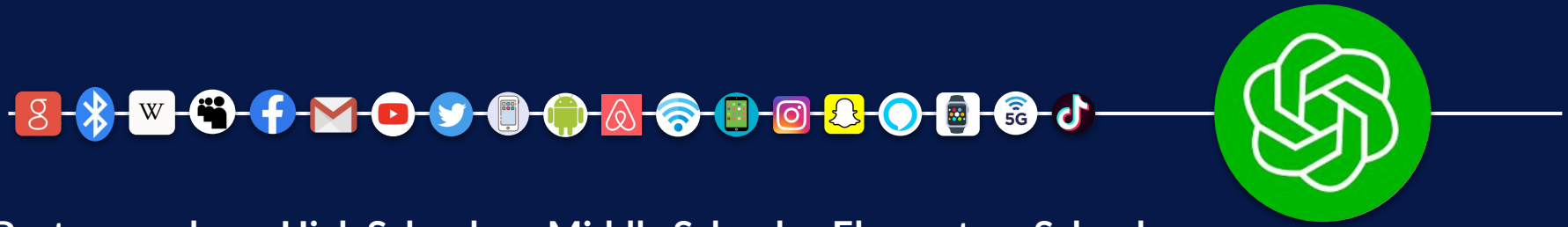


Post-secondary
Born 2002–2006

High School
Born 2006-2011

Middle School
Born 2011-2014

Elementary School
Born 2014–2019

NOW

2025

Adapted from Dr. Sabba Quidwai, Designing Schools

The economy demands different jobs now

Top 20 job roles in increasing and decreasing demand across industries

Fastest-Declining Jobs

1. Postal Service Clerks
2. Bank Tellers & Related Clerks
3. Data Entry Clerks
4. Cashiers and Ticket Clerks
5. Administrative Assistants & Executive Secretaries
6. Printing & Related Trades Workers
7. Accounting, Bookkeeping, & Payroll Clerks
8. Transportation Attendants & Conductors
9. Door-to-Door Sales Workers & Related Workers
10. Graphic Designers

Fastest-Growing Jobs

1. Big Data Specialists
2. FinTech Engineers
3. AI & Machine Learning Specialists
4. Software & Applications Developers
5. Data Warehousing Specialists
6. Autonomous & Electric Vehicle Specialists
7. UI & UX Designers
8. Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers
9. Internet of Things Specialists
10. Data Analysts & Scientists

Source: World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report, 2025

Fastest Growing Sectors by GDP

Sector	GDP Growth 2024 (%)	GDP* (in billions)	Annualized Growth (2019 - 2024)
Agriculture, Forestry, and Hunting	**23.4%**	1.39	-6.5%
Information	**12.1%**	2.20	12.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	**12.0%**	4.68	11.6%
Educational Services	**8.8%**	0.37	6.3%
Mining	**8.6%**	2.29	6.6%

*Real Estate and Leasing is the top industry by GDP at $8,277,833,863

Fastest Growing Sectors by Employment

Sector	Employment	Growth 2024 (%)	Annualized Growth (2019 - 2024)
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	35,550	3.5%	**3.9%**
Transportation and Warehousing	19,184	3.3%	**1.5%**
Construction	49,262	3.2%	**4.0%**
Administration, Business Support and Waste Management Services	28,471	3.2%	**2.4%**
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	22,289	3.1%	**4.4%**

Montana ranks 8th in the nation for fastest employment growth since 2020 - adding over 30,000 jobs through the first half of 2024.

Montana's Workforce

Current Core Top Skills

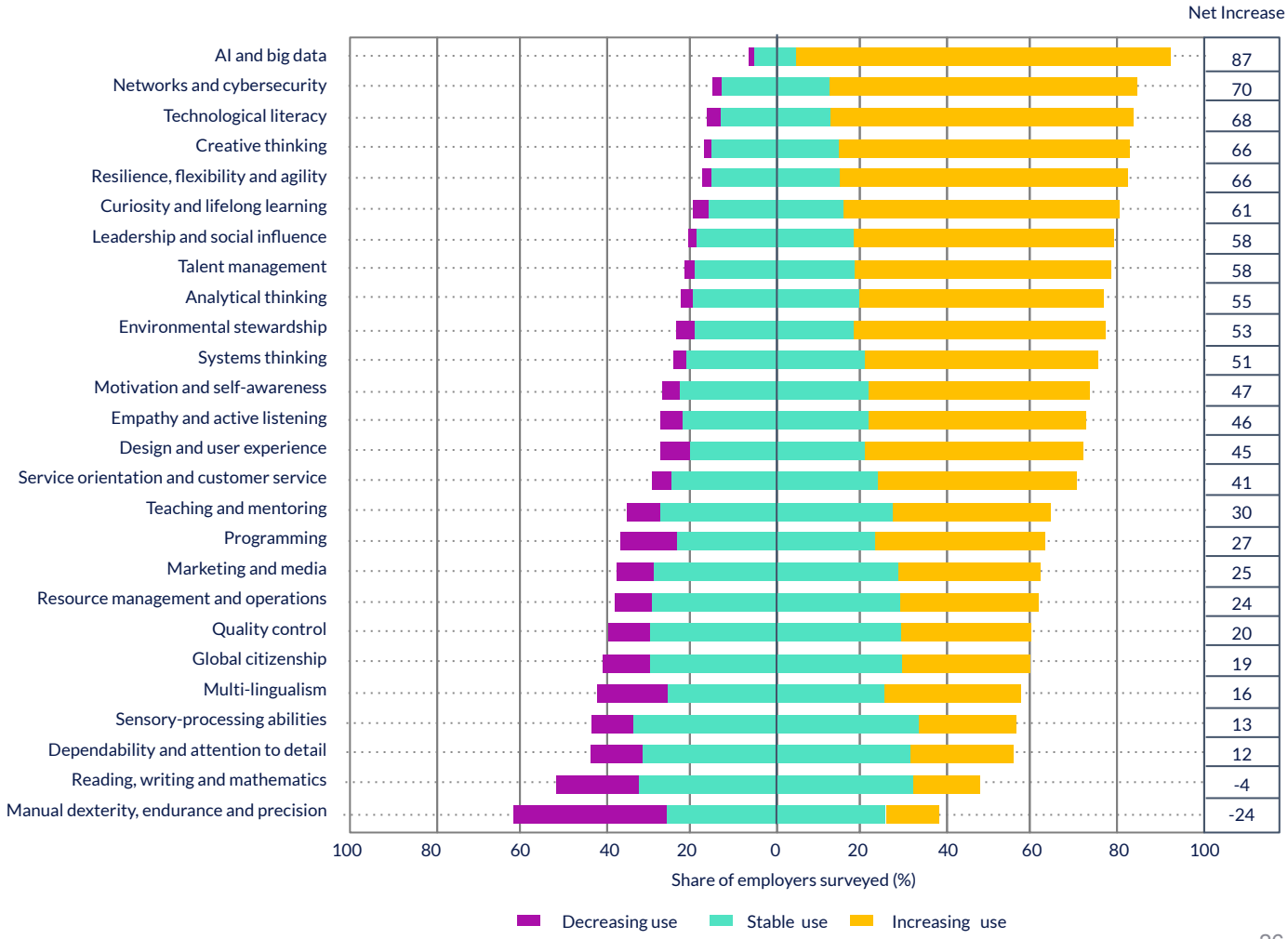
Ranked by Importance

1. Analytical thinking
2. Resilience, flexibility, and agility
3. Leadership and social influence
4. Creative thinking
5. Motivation and self-awareness
6. Technological literacy
7. Empathy and active listening
8. Curiosity and lifelong learning
9. Talent management
10. Service orientation and customer service
11. AI and big data
12. Systems thinking
13. Resource management and operations
14. Dependability and attention to detail
15. Quality control
16. Teaching and mentoring
17. Networks and cybersecurity
18. Design and user experience
19. Multilingualism
20. Marketing and media
21. Reading, writing, and mathematics
22. Environmental stewardship
23. Programming
24. Manual dexterity, endurance and precision
25. Global citizenship
26. Sensory-processing abilities

- Cognitive skills
- Engagement skills
- Ethics
- Management skills
- Physical abilities
- Self-efficacy
- Technology skills
- Working with others

Source: World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report, 2025

Skills on the Rise



Source: World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report, 2025

Social Trends Are Also Shaping the Future

Online friends

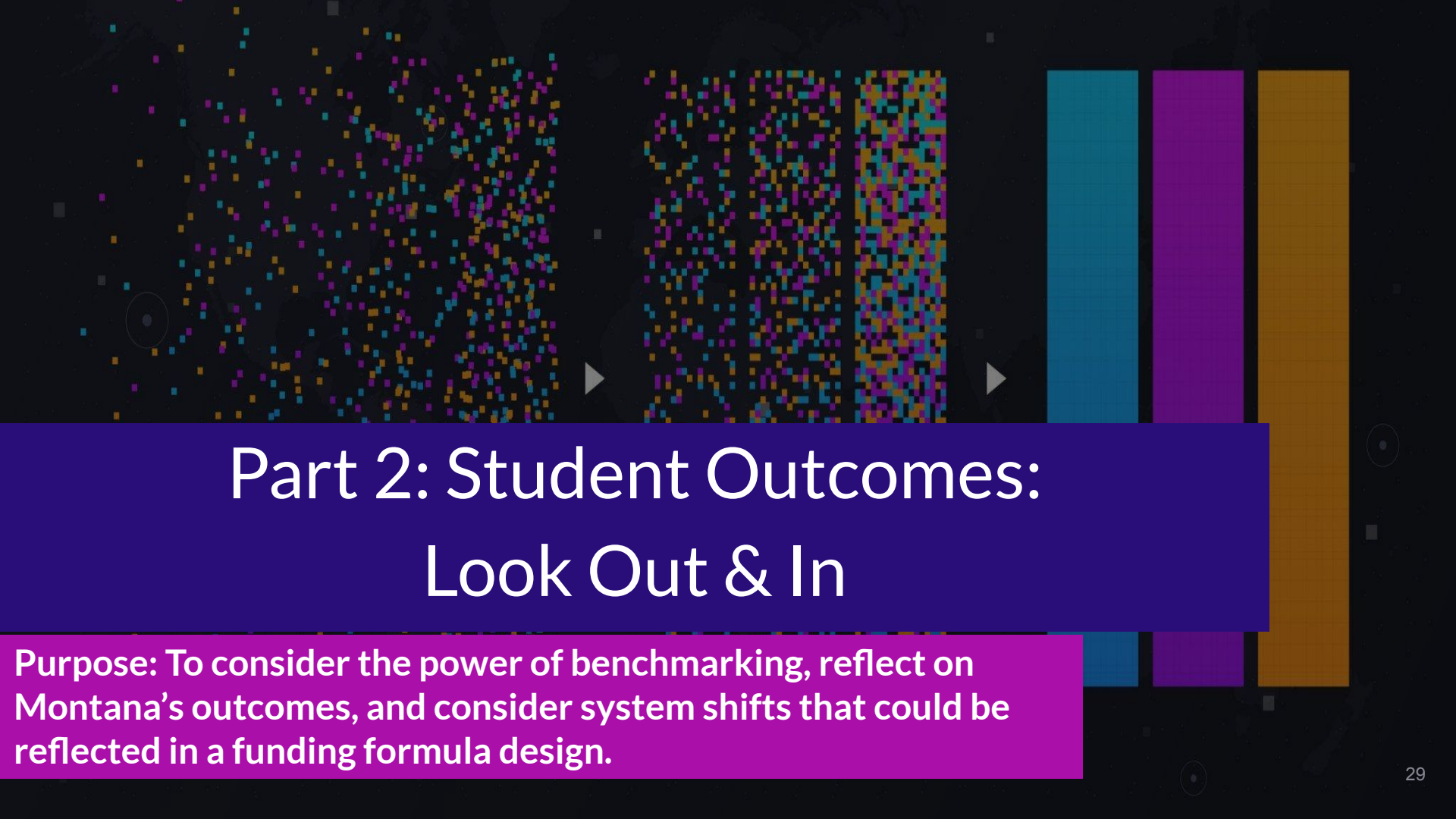
Mental health crisis

Living longer

Remote work / Remote & hybrid schooling

Social media / Social commerce / Augmented reality

Is our system as it is currently designed preparing our young people for this world? How do we know?



Part 2: Student Outcomes: Look Out & In

Purpose: To consider the power of benchmarking, reflect on Montana's outcomes, and consider system shifts that could be reflected in a funding formula design.

NCEE's Global Focus

Why look outside of Montana?

- As the world globalizes, **we compete with the world**, not just our neighbors
- We face **common challenges** across the globe — climate, political division, advancing technology
- Global leaders inform us about how they **adapt to a changing future**
- We **translate insights** from leading global systems to our states, rather than copy them

NCEE's Global Focus

What is common to those high-performing systems?

- Tight connection between **economy and education**, linked to the kind of society they want to create
- **Designed as systems** — parts fit together and reinforce each other
- **Future-focused** – proactive rather than reactive; look around corners

Benchmarking Globally

Why PISA helps us identify high performing systems:

- Assessment of how well 15-year-olds in 79 countries can **apply what they know** in
  - **Reading** literacy (core domain)
  - **Mathematics** literacy
  - **Science** literacy
  - **Global competence** (in some countries)
- **Mixture** of multiple-choice and constructed response
- Measures **application AND transfer** of knowledge
- Paired with survey of student self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and school culture — **not just a score**

PISA 2022

Assessment of how well 15-year-olds in 81 countries can apply what they know in:

Reading literacy

Mathematics literacy (core domain for this year)

Science literacy

Creative Thinking (in some countries, results released in 2024)

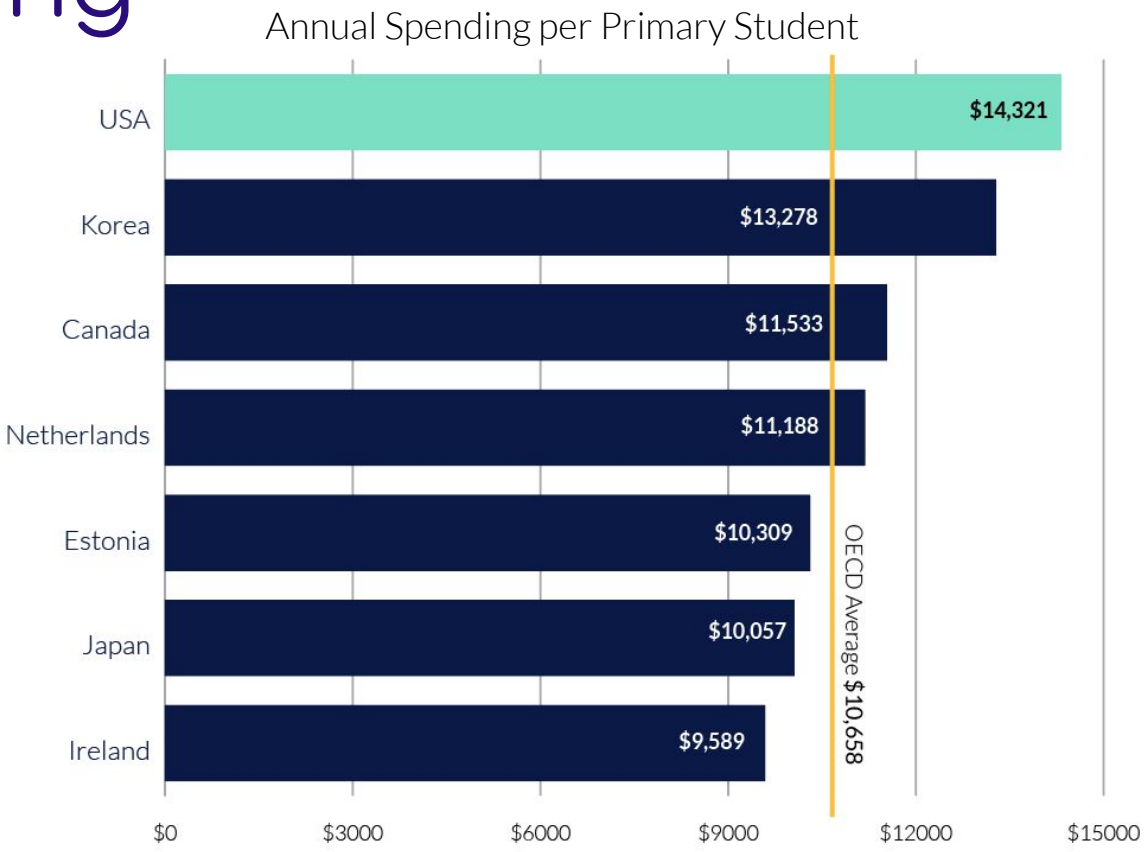
Benchmarking Globally

Who Are Current PISA Leaders?

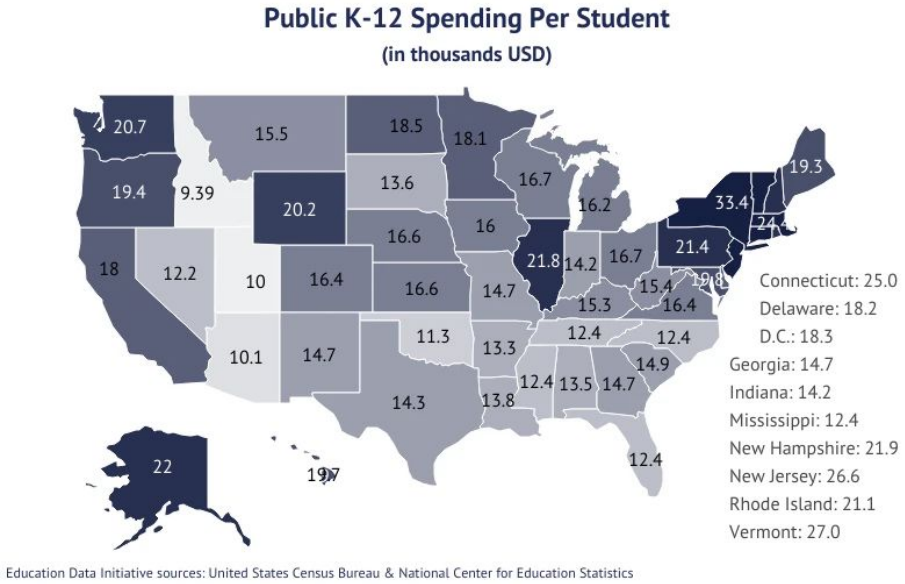
Benchmarking Globally

US Performance on PISA: **Spending**

US spends more per student than the countries that outperform us on PISA



Montana is third in *this* region in spending

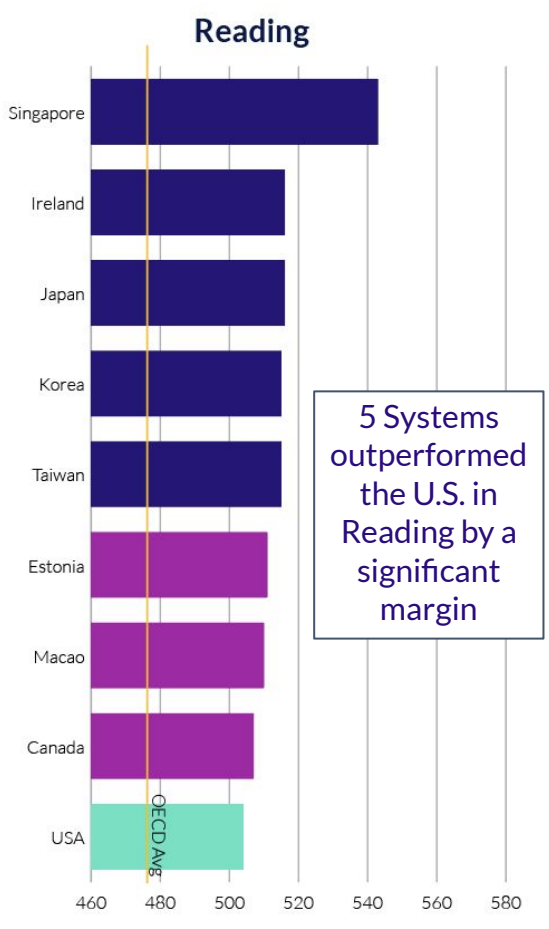


Education Data Initiative sources: United States Census Bureau & National Center for Education Statistics

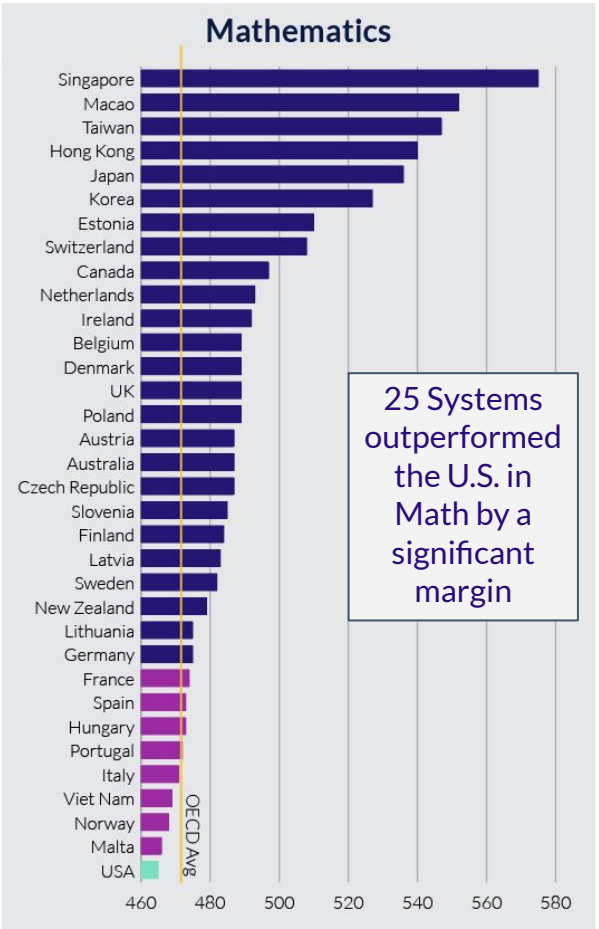
Idaho	9.39
Montana	15.5
North Dakota	18.5
South Dakota	13.6
Wyoming	20.2

Public spending in thousands of US dollars

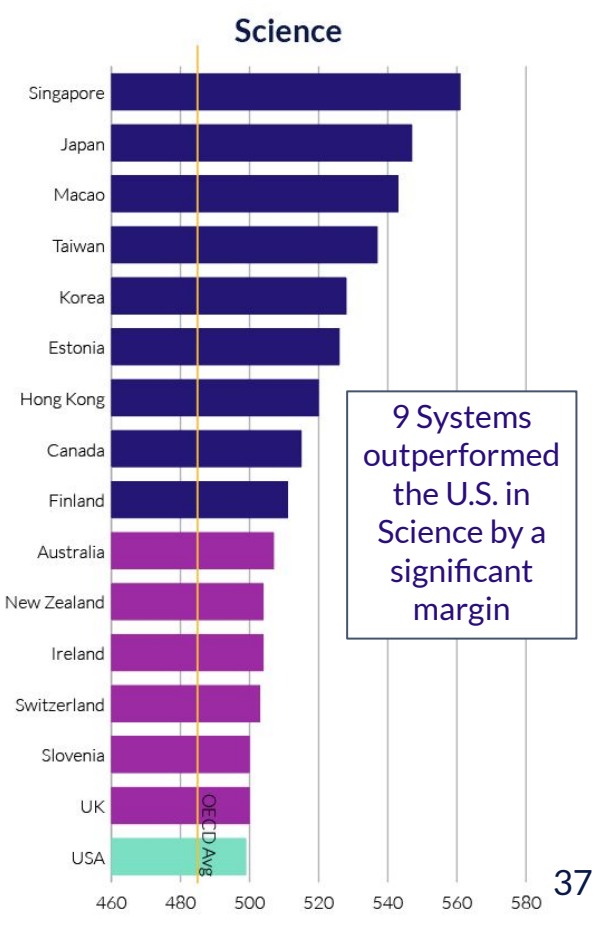
PISA 2022: Ranking the U.S.



5 Systems outperformed the U.S. in Reading by a significant margin



25 Systems outperformed the U.S. in Math by a significant margin

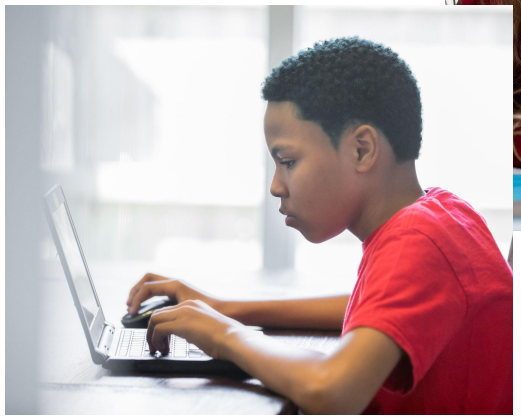


9 Systems outperformed the U.S. in Science by a significant margin

From Global to National: Benchmarking

In the U.S. → NAEP

- Assessment of **4th and 8th graders** nationwide and in each state; **12th graders** nationwide
- Subjects: **math and reading** every two years, broader range of subjects less frequently
- Measures how well students have **mastered a consensus curriculum**



Montana 2024 NAEP

2nd PLACE

8th-grade MATH students had the **second highest scores** in their region, with only Utah achieving a higher average score.

The percentage of students scoring **below basic in MATH** has been **increasing for more than 10 years**. **22% of 4th-grade students scored below basic** (compared to 12% in 2007) and **32% of 8th-grade students scored below basic** (compared to 17% in 2011)

2 ✕

BELOW BASIC

30

YEAR LOW

The average **READING** scores in 2024 for both **4th- and 8th-grade students** are the **lowest** for the state **in 30 years.**

Economically Disadvantaged students scored, on average, **21 points lower** across **READING** and **MATH** for **both 4th- and 8th-grade students**. This group accounts for **over 60% of students scoring below the 25th percentile** on all tests for both grades.

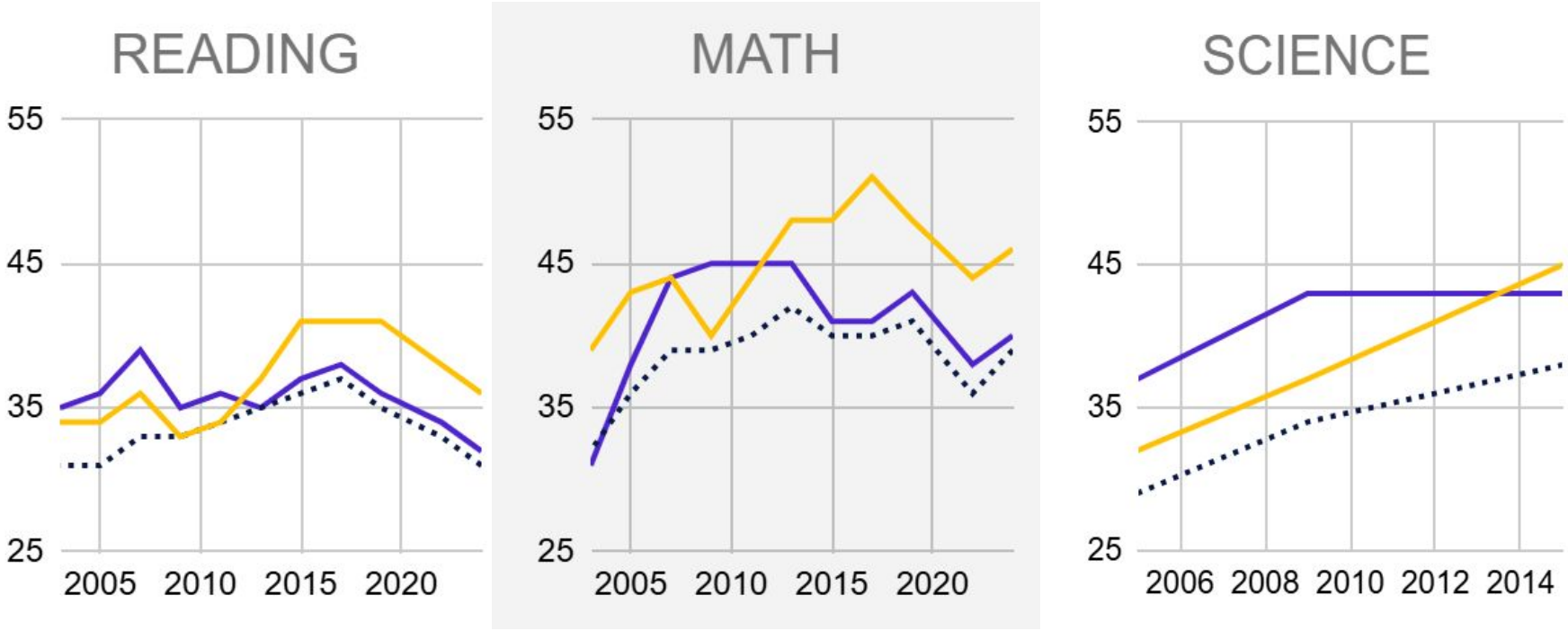
21

Points Lower

NAEP Trends: Fourth Grade

Percentage at or Above Proficient

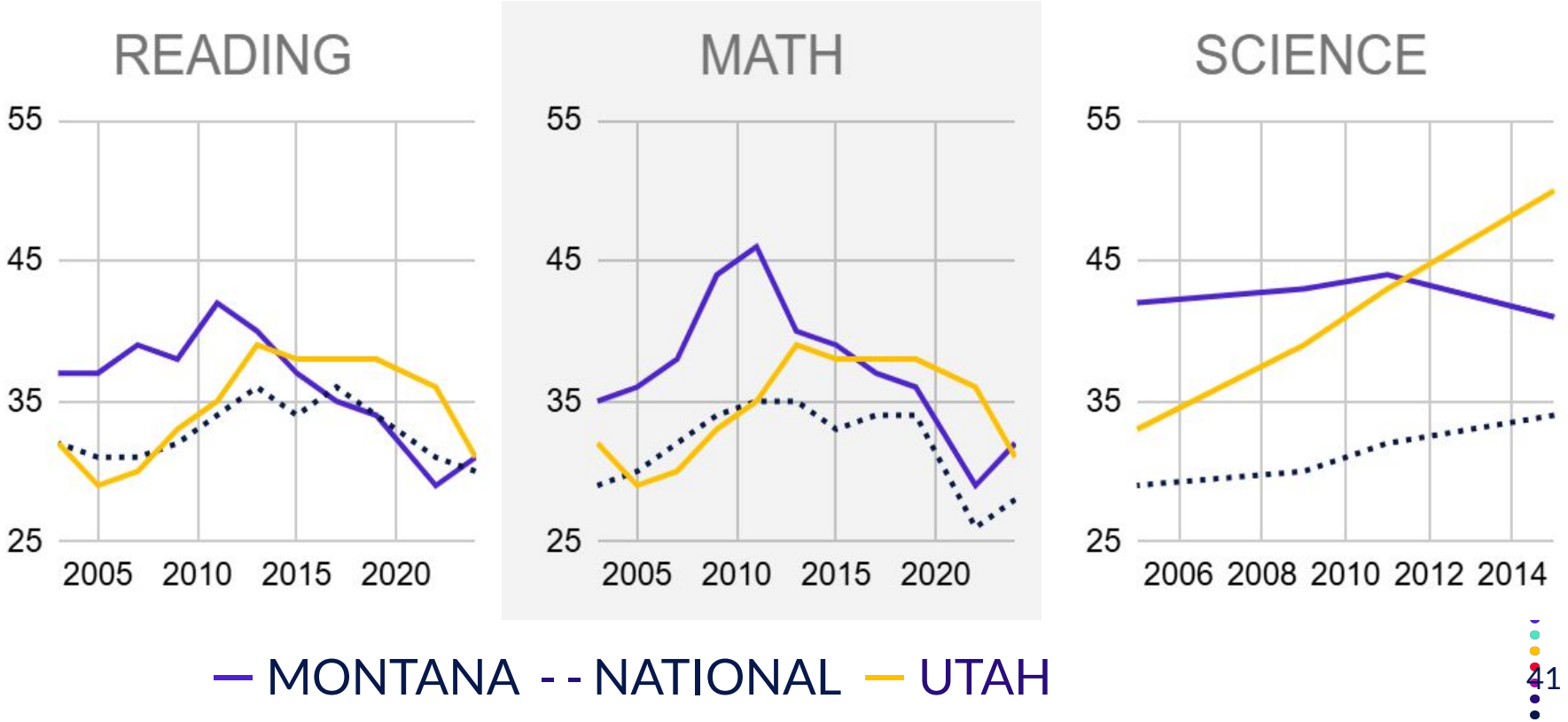
Wyoming has the top 4th-grade NAEP Math scores in the west census region for 2024



NAEP Trends: Eighth Grade

Percentage at or Above Proficient

Utah has the top 8th-grade NAEP Math scores in the west census region for 2024



What Does This Mean for our Students?

U.S. students have basic skills

80% Can recognize a main idea, cause and effect, and if conclusions are warranted

66% Can compare the distance across two different routes on a road, or convert currency

---

But they struggle to apply them.

14% Can distinguish fact from opinion

11% Can apply scientific knowledge to an unfamiliar situation

7% Can model complex situations in math equations and compare and evaluate different ways of solving problems

Future of Learning

What do our students need to thrive in the world they will create?

Part 3: System Features: Look Out & In

Purpose: To discover how high-performing systems achieve strong outcomes, recognize where Montana is aligned, and draw out implications for funding.

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

Academic Mastery/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.

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

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

Constitutional Players

We need curricula, assessments, and learning materials that enable all students to learn the skills they will need for the future of work.

All Montana students should master a set of foundational literacies: reading, writing, mathematics, history, speaking, and listening.

Interviews

We need better ways to meet children where they are.

We need mastery of basic academic skills.

We need a balanced approach for CTE and college-going opportunities.

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.

Constitutional Players

Montana's students … will develop the agency, the motivation, and the capacity to set their own goals and chart their path to achieving them.

Interviews

We need to address mental health and behavioral issues.

We need systems that support graduating job seekers (and other job seekers) and connect them to good paying jobs.

Students need real choices. We need to serve them well and then provide multiple postsecondary pathways they genuinely choose.

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.

Constitutional Players

[Montanans] need a set of competencies including interpersonal skills, collaboration, communication, analytic ability and critical thinking

Interviews

We must hire and retain quality teachers if we are to provide rich educational experiences like foreign language, arts, CTE, and quality special education.

It's essential for us to build college skills and CTE skills. We have to do both.

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.

Constitutional Players

[Montana's young people} should understand their personal and cultural history, and are proud to be a Montanan.

Montanans should relate to, respect, and appreciate other cultures different from their own. In particular, they should honor the unique culture and heritage of the many Native American cultures in Montana.

Interviews

We should provide our students with a sense of civic responsibility.

We need to continue see our indigenous population embraced.

We need adequate buildings to provide critical social and developmental experiences for our students.

Charting the Course:

Learner-Centered

Being learner-centered means **thinking holistically** about students and **engaging students in the messy work of learning**. Learners are co-creators of their learning, making decisions about what they are learning, how they are learning and what action they want to take.

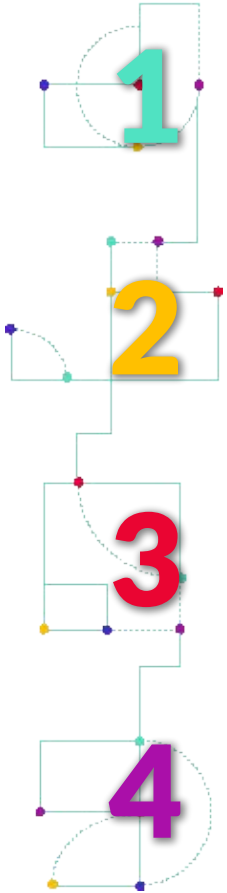
Future-Ready

Being future-ready means attending to and **anticipating the needs of society and the future labor market** when considering the goals of schooling. It is important to consider global economic trends and environmental changes along with local history and culture.

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.

Connecting global to local

- **Read** the assigned Blueprint slides (**included here**) for 10 minutes
  - Young People: Slides 53 - 58
  - Educators: Slides 59 - 61
- **In your small group** discuss the three sets of questions to the right.
- **Choose one idea** or question from the small group discussions to lift up for the whole group
- **Return** to whole group and debrief

15 mins

What feels new or different compared to how we usually think about education in Montana?
What stands out as especially relevant or urgent?

15 mins

How do the Montana examples make this component real in our context?
Where do we already see strengths or seeds of this work in Montana?

10 mins

What might it take for Montana to move further in this direction?
What implications for funding would policymakers consider?

1 Prepare young people for long-life learning

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

Thinking Differently about Developing Student Agency for Work and Life

- Time for developing **core** skills varies by subject and age.
- Scheduling by cohort supports development of community skills.
- Time for well-being is a priority.
- Time in broader learning experiences helps students develop contemporary skills.

Funding high-quality early childhood education and care

- **DPHSS Early Childhood and Family Support Division**
- **DPHSS Child Care and Early Childhood Services**
- **OPI Early Learning Standards**

752 students are enrolled in public pre-kindergarten programs throughout the Montana in the 2024-25 school year.

Montana's **Best Beginnings Childcare Scholarship (BBS)** helps low-income families earning less than 185% of the Federal Poverty Level access affordable, high-quality child care by **providing co-payments based on a sliding fee scale**. Childcare providers can also become **licensed and receive BBS subsidy payments** through this program.

Montana Milestones Early Intervention Program offers a collection of services and supports for families with children ages birth through three who have **significant developmental delays, disabilities, or have been diagnosed with an established condition.**

Montana DLI's 2024 report found that **child care capacity meets only 44% of the estimated demand in the state**, and 59% of Montana counties exist in childcare deserts. While Montana has made efforts to expand access to pre-K education, **the state ranks among the bottom six states in terms of preschool access.**

Prepare Young People For Long Life Learning

Promoting and assessing future-ready competencies

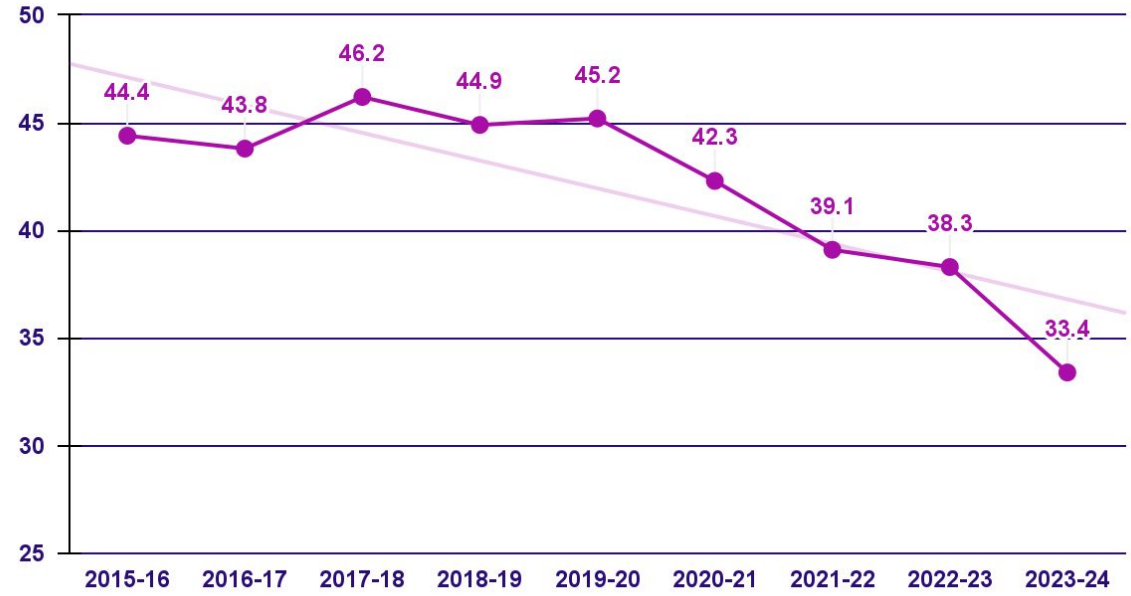
Spark Phonetics creates educational programming focused on the **semiconductor and photonics industries**, with implementations in Glendive and Billings, Montana. By bringing **industry-specific education directly to high school students**, Spark Photonics is **cultivating a future workforce** while giving students a voice in shaping their career paths. 🔗

Montana Contractors Association Education Foundation focuses on **promoting and supporting careers in construction** by providing financial support for scholarships, postsecondary training programs, and university construction departments. Their goal is to **stimulate the growth of a diverse, skilled workforce for Montana contractors**. Forecasts point to the construction sector as the largest contributor to job creation until 2032. 🔗🔗

Montana Work-Based Learning Collaborative Teacher Externship Program offers educators the unique opportunity to **partner with statewide industry leaders** and **participate in short-term, immersive externship experiences** to gain knowledge about related skills and competencies. After completing their externships, teachers share their experiences with Montana businesses in their classrooms, **extending hands-on, real-wide knowledge about the state's industry landscape to high school students.** 🔗

Promoting and assessing future-ready competencies

College Enrollment Rates (%) by HS Graduating Class



Since 2010, college enrollment in Montana has declined by

11.5%

28.6%

of all residents enrolled in college leave Montana to attend school.

Prepare Young People For Long Life Learning

Creating next generation career pathways

Montana DLI's **Job Projection Tool** organizes information about projected industry trends by region and occupation, and includes details about minimum education or training requirements, annual openings, and wages. DLI forecasts point to the **construction industry and healthcare sector** as the largest contributors to job creation.

Montana Labor Report (2024)

Montana is **launching a statewide Credential Registry**, facilitated by Accelerate Montana and Credential Engine, to create a centralized platform that **enhances transparency and accessibility of educational credentials and career pathways, aligning education with workforce needs**.

Montana Labor Market Information

The Montana **Career Lab** offers a comprehensive set of career planning tools, including publications, videos, and online resources, with a key feature being **MCIS 360,** a unified system that provides detailed information on occupations, educational programs, scholarships, and interest assessments to support informed career decisions.

OPI CTE Guidance Documents

2 Cultivate high-capacity, forward-thinking educators

1. Valued, supported profession
2. Ongoing learning/career advancement
3. Evolving roles & competencies
4. Time, space, staffing reimagined
5. 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 professional learning and collaboration time.

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.**

Cultivate High-Capacity, Forward-Thinking Educators

Sharing Across Groups:

Your Big Ideas & Questions

The Montana Landscape: A Funding Tutorial - Pt 1

Day 1: Slido

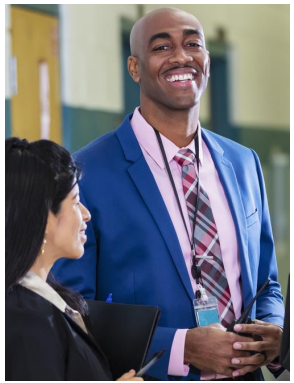
What learning from today would you like to re-visit tomorrow?











NCEE

Innovation and Excellence in Education Working Group

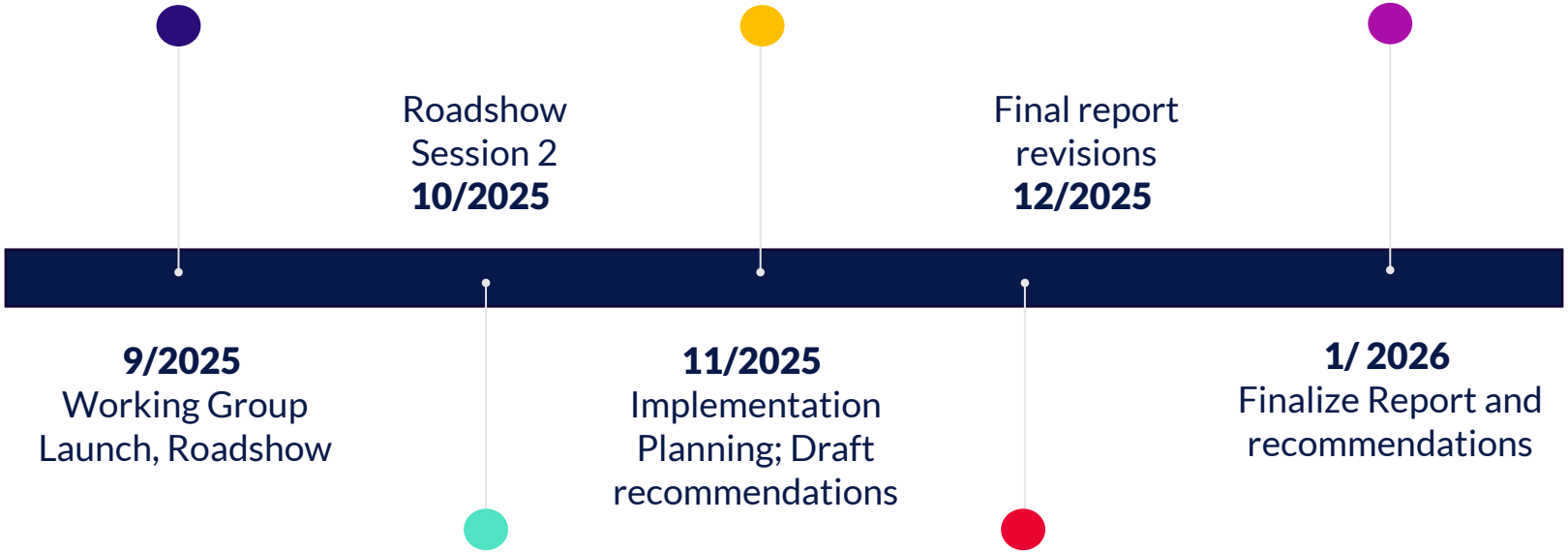
Montana's School Funding Interim Commission

National Center on Education and the Economy
September 15 and 16, 2025

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.

Innovation Working Group Timeline



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.

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 and prioritized policy levers for Montana, and inform the Roadshow design

Design:

Finalize prompts for use during the Roadshow to solicit input from the public

Bringing Clarity: Slido

Note that this slide is hidden because it will be populated by responses to the Day One Slido

Part 3: System Features: Look Out & In - Continued

Purpose: To discover how high-performing systems achieve strong outcomes, recognize where Montana is aligned, and draw out implications for funding.

Connecting global to local

- **Read** the assigned Blueprint slides (**included here**) for 10 minutes
  - Join Forces: Slides 73 - 75
  - Think Differently: Slides 76 - 77
- **In your small group** discuss the three sets of questions to the right.
- **Choose one idea** or question from the small group discussions to lift up for the whole group
- **Return** to whole group and debrief

15 mins

What feels new or different compared to how we usually think about education in Montana?
What stands out as especially relevant or urgent?

15 mins

How do the Montana examples make this component real in our context?
Where do we already see strengths or seeds of this work in Montana?

10 mins

What might it take for Montana to move further in this direction?
What implications for funding would policymakers consider?

3 Join forces to ensure learners thrive

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

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.

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.

Join Forces to Ensure Learners Thrive

4 Think differently about system leadership

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**

Preparing and developing leaders in fundamentals and the vanguard of leadership

Montana has several **statewide initiatives to support leadership**, including:

- Office of Public Instruction Learning Hub
- Montana Association of School Business Officials
- School Administrators of Montana
- School Services of Montana

The top, **university-based principal leadership** programs are:

- Educational Leadership - Montana State University
- Department of Educational Leadership - University of Montana
- Educational Leadership - Rocky Mountain College

Sharing Across Groups (Part 2):

Your Big Ideas & Questions

Thought Exchange

What is a key shift that, if made in Montana, would better prepare our young people to be future-ready?

The Roadshow

Gathering the Voices of 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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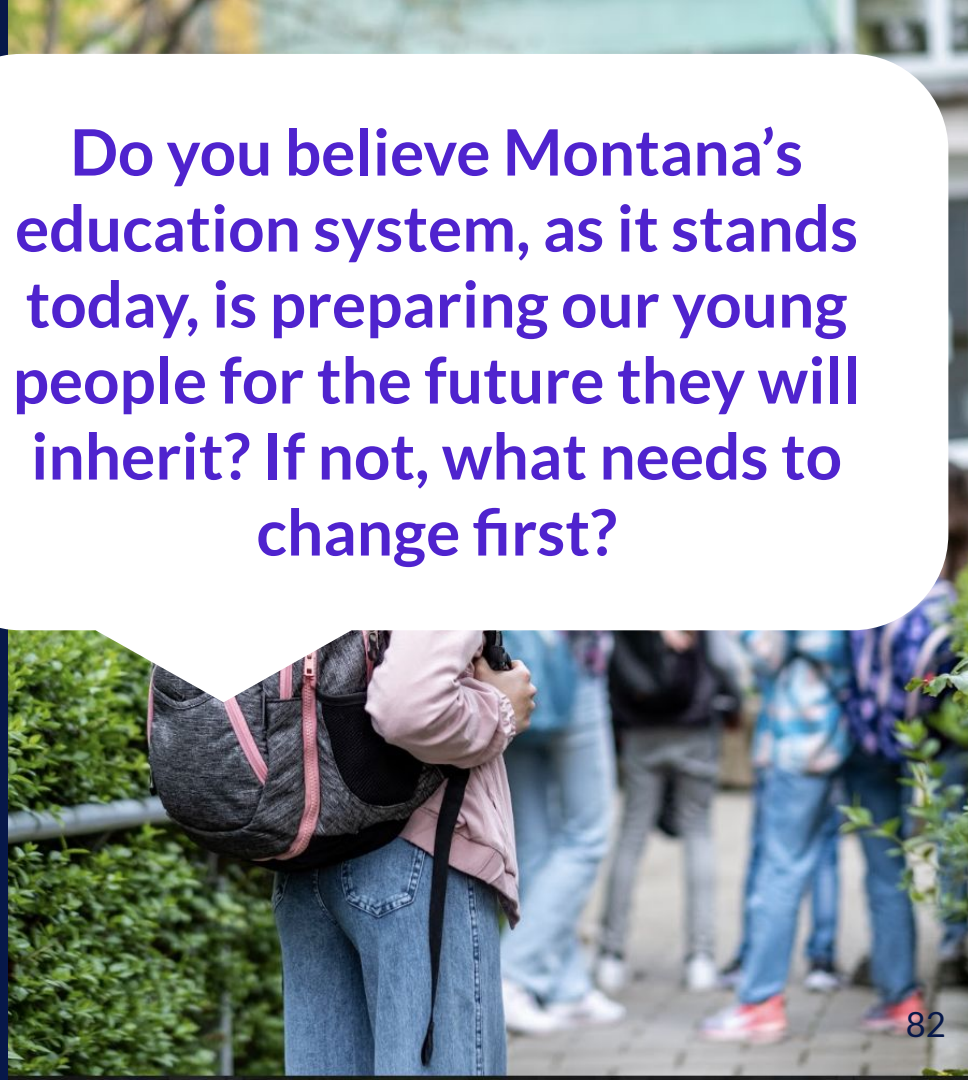
- ➔ Our decennial funding effort can start with reimagining the system to ensure we're funding what works.

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?



82

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.

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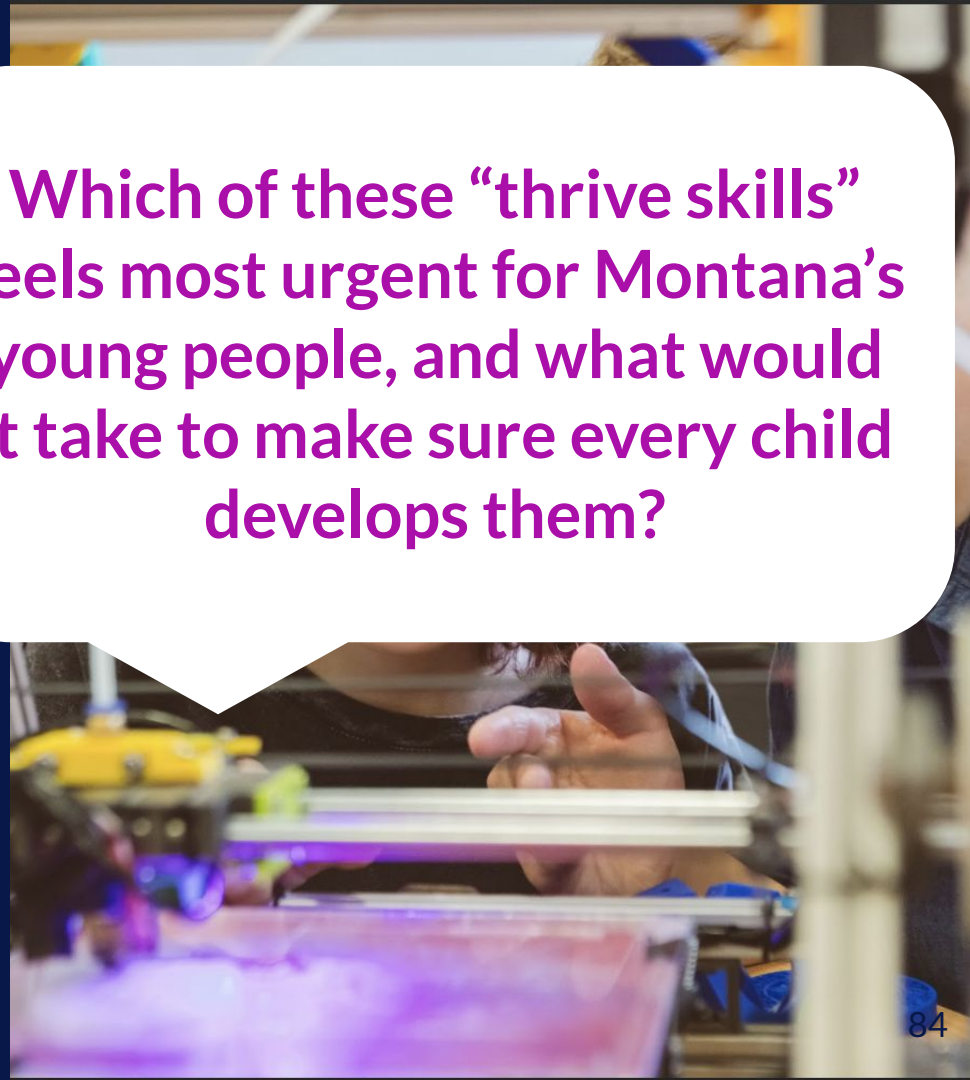

Which of these "thrive skills" feels most urgent for Montana's young people, and what would it take to make sure every child develops them?

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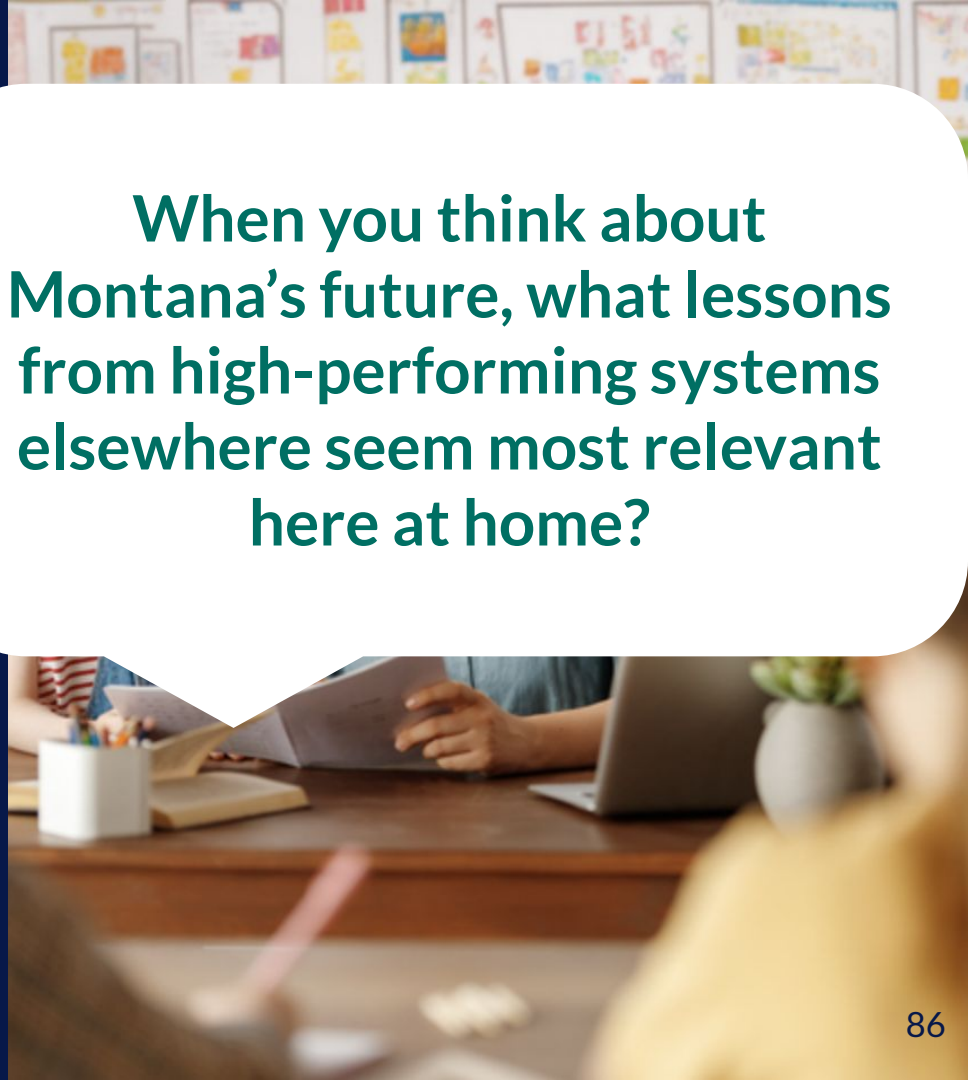
When you think about Montana's future, what lessons from high-performing systems elsewhere seem most relevant here at home?



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

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Designing Roadshow Prompts: Criteria

Criteria for a strong prompt:

- Rooted in commissioner input + our learning
- Accessible language (jargon-free, relatable)
- Open enough to invite diverse perspectives
- Focused enough to yield actionable insights

Designing Roadshow Prompts:
Examples to Consider

Sample 1: *Thinking about the future of young people in Montana, what skills or qualities do you believe they will need most, and why?*

Sample 2: *Looking ahead 10 years, what should Montana's education system prioritize to best prepare our students and communities?*

Sample 3: *What needs to change first in Montana's schools to ensure every young person is prepared for the world they are facing?*

Sample 4: *Looking ahead 10 years, What is a key shift that, if made in Montana, would better prepare our young people to be future-ready?*

We'll close where the roadshow will begin…

What might student-centered, future forward investments in Montana's schools look like?

Thought Exchange

Enter prompt:

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 will use a structured feedback loop to collect and integrate input from across Montana, ensuring many voices inform the development process.

The Montana Landscape: A Funding Tutorial - Pt 2

Matt Bachand

Senior Designer, Policy
mbachand@ncee.org

Janice Case

Regional Director West
jcase@ncee.org

Nathan Driskell

Chief Policy Officer
ndriskell@ncee.org

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