



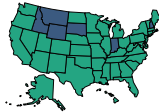
## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MONTANA

One of the best ways to set children up for success in school and life is through early childhood education. Children's brains are rapidly developing in their first five years of life, which is why exposure to quality early learning and nurturing relationships is critical. Access to early childhood education supports communities across the state in promoting a high-performing education system that prepares graduates for careers, college, and beyond.



**60%**

of Montana's 3- and 4-year-olds are not enrolled in any type of school readiness program.<sup>1</sup>



**MT IS 1 OF 6 STATES**

without a public preschool option. 44 other states have it, leaving Montana's children & parents far behind.<sup>2</sup>



**UP TO \$16 ROI**

for every \$1 spent. Children are more likely to be ready for school, attend college, and have higher earning potential.<sup>3,4</sup>



**BETTER OUTCOMES**

for kids in early education, from increased math and reading skills to enhanced social and emotional development.<sup>5</sup>



**\$8,000 A YEAR AND UP**

is the average cost for hardworking families to access private early education programs for their young kids.<sup>6</sup>



**6,349 CHILDREN**

ages 3-5 are eligible for Head Start in Montana. However, only 43% of children can access a Head Start slot.<sup>7,8</sup>



Sources: 1. Montana Kids Count. (2019). Young children not in school. 2. National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). (2021). State of Preschool. 3. United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation. (2022). The Bedrock of American Business; High-Quality Early Childhood Education. 4. The Heckman Equation. (2012). Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy. 5. The Heckman Equation. (2016). Early Childhood Education: Quality and Access Pay Off. 6. Montana Budget and Policy Center. (2016). Child Care in Montana: Access to Affordable and Quality Care. (Note: The cost for care has been cited because this is the best available comparison to the cost of private early childhood education programs). 7. Montana Kids Count. (2020). Number of Montana children in 2020 ages 3-5 who are potentially eligible for Head Start. 8. Office of Head Start. (2021). Program Information Report, Summary Report, State Level, Montana.