

The 2025-26 Decennial School Interim Funding Study



How MFPE Members Are Getting Involved:

Join the DSLT!

The Decennial Study Leadership Team is how we stay connected & engaged throughout the study!

Join at [MFPE.org/DSLTLT](https://mfpe.org/DSLTLT)

Town Halls

MFPE members are holding School Funding Town Halls across the state to make sure legislators and communities hear from us.

Take the Survey!

The commission is picking and choosing data. Go to [MFPE.org/DSLTSurvey](https://mfpe.org/DSLTSurvey) to make sure they know what's happening on the ground.

Testify, Email, & Call

Be on the lookout for opportunities to directly weigh in with commission members as they work.

Stories from the ground:

"I have less than \$40 per student for tools & materials. This means I cannot afford to provide each student with even a single sheet of plywood or metal for projects in a yearlong class." ~ **Kyle M., Plains**

"We have fewer behavior intervention counselors to support students in crisis. Students in crisis struggle in classrooms and constant disruptions take learning away from other students. Teachers cannot teach when escalations occur." ~ **Val P., Miles City**

"We have been trying to pass a Mill Levy for the past 4 years and have yet to do so. We haven't had a janitor begin and end the year with us in the last three years. The biggest issue with funding however has been the ability to hire and pay paraprofessionals." ~ **Skye M., Frenchtown**



Sign-up here!
[MFPE.org/DSLTLT](https://mfpe.org/DSLTLT)

Contact MFPE Public Policy
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What is the Decennial School Funding Interim Commission?

It is a study commission required every ten years, between legislative sessions, to closely examine whether the school funding formula meets our constitutional obligation to fulfill the educational potential of every student through a system of quality public schools.

12 legislators and 8 others serve on the commission.

Their findings & recommendations will be considered by the 2027 Legislature.

The State of School Funding

Studies consistently show students, parents, and families trust their local educators and public schools.

65%

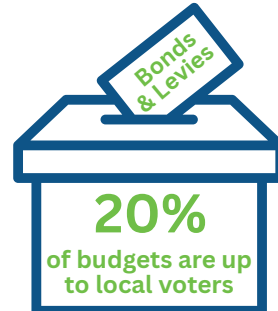
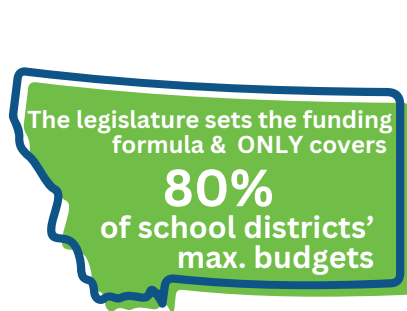
of Montanans believe our public schools are not adequately funded

69%

of Montanans DO NOT want to see Montana tax dollars go to private schools.

Searchlight Research, 2025

Our State's Current Funding Approach Is Scattershot, Local Voters Decide Whether Students Win or Lose



State Funding is driven by per-student funding (ANB), the number of educators & licensed professionals, and the number of American Indian students. As our communities change, the volatility in per-student funding impacts the ability to hire educators which leads to gaps in student learning. **The commission must plan to mitigate federal funding uncertainties.**

In 2025, roughly 1 out of 2 local school levies passed as Montanans feel financial pressures. Students suffer when levies fail.

Educators & Staff Are Falling Behind

-1.7%

Real wage growth for educators of all experiences over the past 5 years

32-58%

Amount of GROSS income starting teachers would spend for a starter home mortgage

School staff – the paraprofessionals, office personnel, bus drivers, nurses, & beyond – are critical to student success.

These staff members cannot access unemployment insurance over the summer months.

Solving this problem will address retention & recruitment challenges.

50%

Of newly graduated Montana teachers leave the state or do not enter the field

1 in 4

Teachers of all experiences have a 2nd or 3rd job, not just during summer

Gov. Gianforte's own 2024 Dept. of Labor Educator Pay Report

MFPE Members' Priorities

MFPE members' decennial study priorities are student and family-centered.

1 Students learn best when their primary needs are being met.

- A fully funded quality school breakfast and lunch.
- Full-time, daily access to a licensed nurse.
- Full-time, daily access to a licensed mental health professional.
- Time every day to play.
- To graduate with a well-rounded education which includes music, art, library, PE, language, and CTE in addition to core subjects.
- Access to special education services and individualized supports, such as IEP and 504 plans, to ensure equitable opportunities for success.

2 Every student deserves highly trained professionals providing face-to-face learning. Recruit and retain the best in-person teachers and support staff.

- Fund salaries commensurate with similar education levels and experience when compared to other professions.
- Fund salaries that allow school employees to live in the communities in which they work, so they can fully participate in the school community.
- Provide a creative benefits package that allows school employees to focus on students. For example, consider
 - Low-deductible, high-quality health insurance; retirement benefits; childcare; summer unemployment benefits for support staff; affordable housing; paid family leave
- Guarantee teacher-led professional development is available at no or low cost to educators.
- Fully fund enough paraprofessional positions to support all student needs.

3 Every student deserves a safe place to learn.

- Fund safe facilities with up-to-date infrastructure and security, HVAC, and water systems.