

EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Montana 406 JOBS Sector Analysis





State of Montana

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montana's education and child care industries are vital to the state economy. These industries care for and educate many Montanans, while also allowing parents the choice to be fully engaged in Montana's labor force. Education and child care provide essential services, with jobs spanning the entire state. A reliable and trained workforce is needed throughout the state to ensure access to this service for all Montanans.

The 406 JOBS initiative, established by Governor Gianforte's Executive Order in August 2025, identifies Education and Child Care as a critical sector of the Montana economy. This sector spans employment from early childhood through postsecondary education, as well as educational support and specialized instruction. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the education and child care labor market and identifies workforce training needs to ensure a strong pipeline of skilled workers for Montana's Education and Child Care sector. Highlights include:

- In 2024, there were over 44,270 Education and Child Care jobs in Montana – comprising nearly 9% of all jobs statewide.
 - Public education represents the largest component of Montana's Education and Child Care sector, with public elementary and secondary schools accounting for 55% of sector employment and the state's colleges and universities accounting for 24% of sector employment.
 - Education and Child Care jobs are found statewide. Gallatin and Missoula counties have a high share of sector jobs due to the presence of major public universities.
- Education and Child Care jobs pay below the statewide average, reporting \$48,400 average annual wage in 2024 compared to \$60,000 statewide.
 - Real wage growth has averaged -0.03% per year since 2019, growing similar to the cost of living and suggesting no change in the standard of living for these workers.
 - Real wages fell by 1.7% per year for Montana teachers between the 2017-18 and 2022-23 school years.
- Montana's Education and Child Care workforce has expanded slowly over the last decade, averaging 0.4% growth per year.
 - Child Care employment has grown faster than the sector average over the last ten years, averaging 2% annual job growth.
 - Sector job growth was slower than growth in other industries across Montana.
- Education and Child Care employment is projected to grow by 0.2% per year, slightly below the sector's long-run average.
- MTDLI estimates about 4,400 annual job openings in the Education and Child Care sector over the next ten years, primarily replacing workers who leave the industry.
 - About half of these projected job openings in the Education and Child Care sector will require a college degree.
 - Nearly 50% of all Education and Child Care job openings are projected to occur in one of ten occupations – including preschool, elementary, and secondary teachers, teaching assistants, and child care workers.
- Most of the high-demand education and child care occupations are undersupplied, including child care workers, teaching assistants, and preschool, kindergarten, secondary school, special education, and substitute teachers.
 - Many non-teaching occupations are also undersupplied, including social workers, psychologists, librarians, library technicians, coaches and scouts.

Montana's Education and Child Care sector is essential to the state economy, employing a significant portion of the workforce in essential jobs. Aligning efforts to recruit, train, upskill, and retain education and child care workers in all parts of the state will be important to ensure the Education and Child Care sector can continue to care for and educate Montanans.

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INTRODUCTION

Education and child care are vital components of Montana’s economy, supporting both the current and future workforce. These industries not only educate children but also enable parents to participate fully in the labor force. Spanning communities across Montana—from the largest cities to the most rural areas—they employ thousands of workers who provide essential services every day. While many positions require specialized training or higher education, wages in education and child care remain relatively low compared to other fields with similar skill requirements. Employers in these sectors continue to report challenges with recruitment and retention, highlighting the importance of targeted training efforts and workforce strategies to support their long-term stability and growth.

The Governor’s 406 JOBS initiative identifies the Education and Child Care sector as a critical component to the state economy. Jobs in public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education are the largest components to this sector. However, the sector also includes private schools, tech and training providers, child care services, educational support, and other non-academic instruction. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the education and child care labor market and identifies workforce training needs to ensure a strong pipeline of skilled workers for Montana’s Education and Child Care sector.

Sector Definition

Education and Child Care in the 406 JOBS Initiative

The Education and Child Care sector, as defined by the 406 JOBS initiative, includes the following industries in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS):

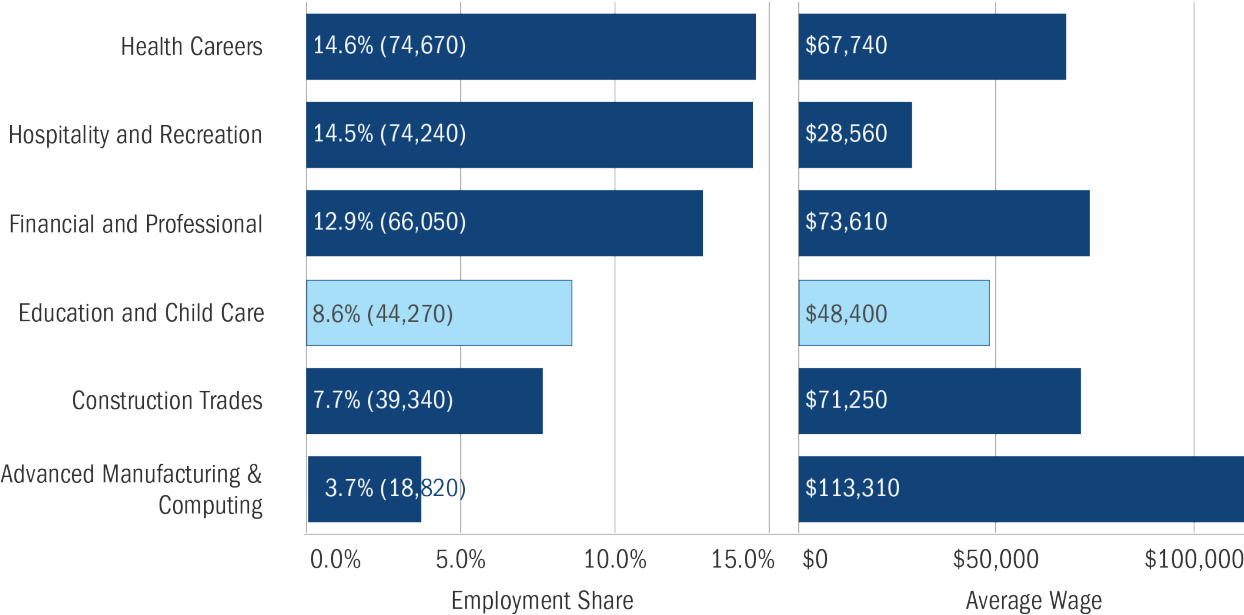
- **Educational Services (NAICS 61)**
 - **Elementary and Secondary Schools** – Includes Montana’s public K-12 school system and other private elementary and secondary schools (NAICS 6111)
 - **Postsecondary Education** – Includes the Montana University System, Tribal Colleges, private colleges and universities (NAICS 6112 and NAICS 6113), trade and vocational schools (NAICS 6115), and other professional skills training (NAICS 6114).
 - **Other Education and Support Services** – Non-academic, specialized training such as sports camps, music and art programs, driving schools, language courses, and tutoring and test preparation (NAICS 6116) and non-instructional support services such as testing centers and curriculum development (NAICS 6117).
- **Child Day Care Services (NAICS 6244)** – Includes early care and education programs such as Head Start preschools, licensed child care centers, group and family home providers, and before/after school care.

EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE LABOR MARKET OVERVIEW

Montana’s Education and Child Care sector supports the state economy by caring for, educating, and training the next generation of Montanans. This sector plays a vital role in enabling parents to participate in the workforce, sustaining labor force participation and economic productivity across the state. Beyond their broader economic contributions, education and child care providers are among the largest and most stable employers in many rural communities, offering essential jobs that strengthen local economies and support community vitality across Montana.

The Education and Child Care sector supports over 44,000 jobs, comprising 9% of Montana’s total employment. Education and Child Care jobs pay below the statewide average, reporting an average annual wage of \$48,400 in 2024 compared to \$60,000 across all Montana jobs. Most education employment is in the public sector (62% local government, 23% state government, and 14% private sector), while child care is primarily private (98%). Figure 1 shows the number of jobs and average annual wages for the 406 JOBS sectors.

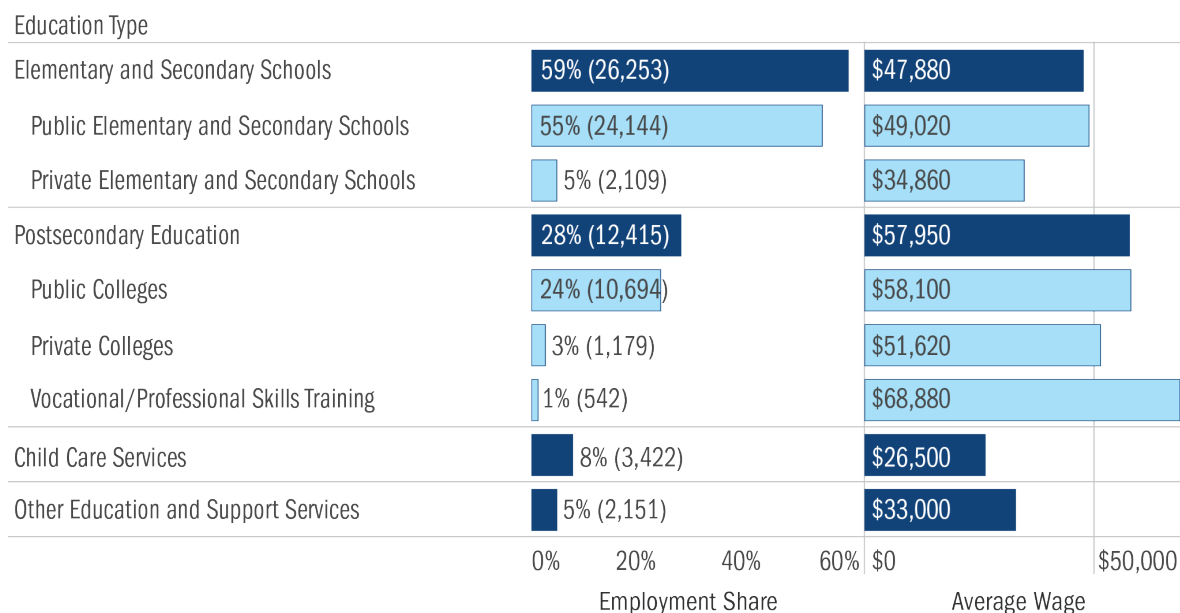
FIGURE 1: EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES BY 406 JOBS SECTOR, 2024



Source: BLS QCEW, Includes both private sector and government.

There are four subsectors within the Education and Child Care sector – elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education, child care, and other education and support services. Elementary and secondary schools is the largest subsector, employing nearly 60% of all workers in Education and Child Care. Most of these individuals work for Montana’s public K-12 school system. The average worker in the state’s public K-12 system earns \$49,000 annually, just above the sector average. Figure 2 shows the number of jobs and average annual wages for each Education and Child Care subsector.

FIGURE 2: EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES BY EDUCATION & CHILD CARE SUBINDUSTRY, 2024



Source: US BLS QCEW, Includes both private sector and government. Colleges include NAICS 6112 (Junior Colleges) and 6113 (Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools). Vocational/Professional training includes NAICS 6114 (Business Schools and Computer and Management Training) and 6115 (Technical and Trade Schools). NAICS 6114 estimated based on 2023 data.

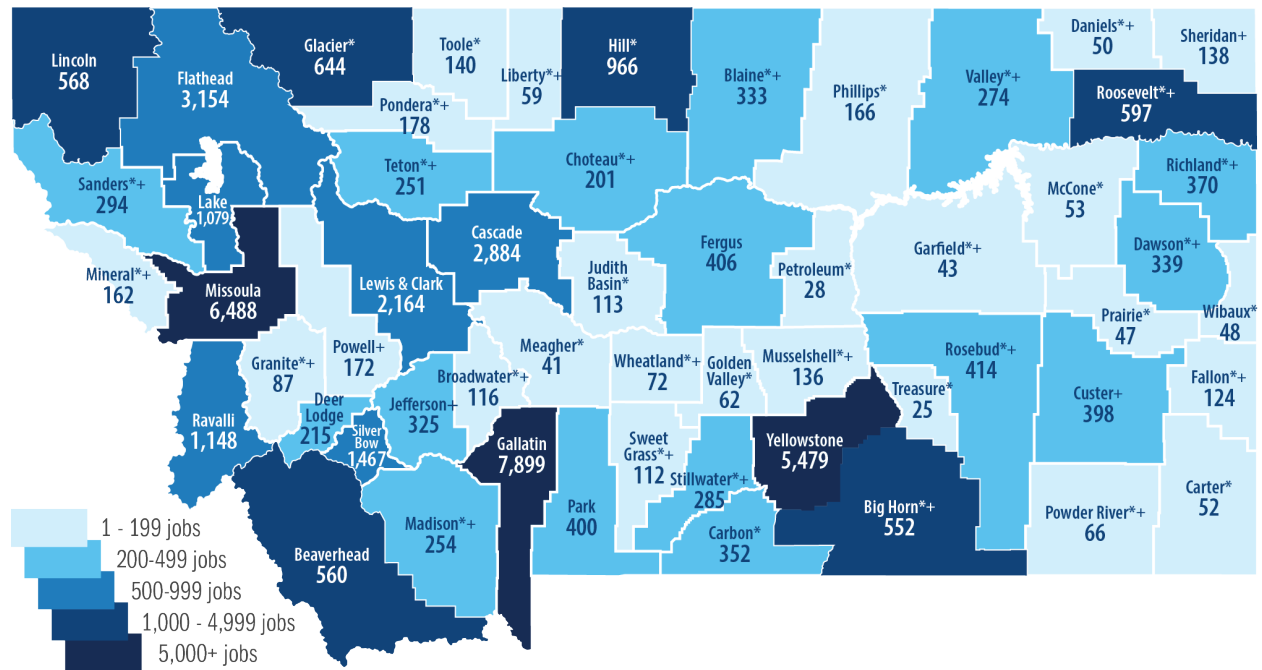
Postsecondary education is the second largest share of Montana’s Education and Child Care sector, accounting for 28% of jobs. This subsector includes traditional 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities, as well as vocational, professional skills, and other training programs beyond K-12. Most workers are employed by public institutions, including the Montana University System and Montana’s Tribal Colleges. About 500 people work in vocational and professional skills training programs that offer job specific certifications, apprenticeships, and other non degree credentials, representing about 1% of sector employment.

Child care services employ 8% of the Education and Child Care workforce, translating to roughly 3,400 jobs. Child care services include early care and education programs such as Head Start preschools, licensed child care centers, group and family home providers, and before/after school care. Workers employed in child care services earn \$26,500 on average, the lowest wage in the Education and Child Care sector.

The Education and Child Care sector also includes other education and support services. Other education is non-academic, specialized training such as sports camps, music and art programs, driving schools, language courses, and tutoring and test preparation. Support services are organizations providing non-instructional support services for education, including testing services or curriculum development. These jobs make up about 5% of the sector jobs, paying an average annual wage of \$33,000.

The Education and Child Care sector provides essential services to children and families throughout the state and therefore forms a critical part of the labor market in every county in Montana. Education and child care is one of the largest sources of employment in rural counties. The sector has greater representation in rural counties than other sectors of the Montana economy. About 28% of Education and Child Care sector jobs are in rural counties, compared with 25% of all Montana jobs.¹ Figure 3 shows the number of Education and Child Care jobs in each county in 2024.

FIGURE 3: EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN MONTANA COUNTIES, 2024



Source: US BLS QCEW, Includes both private sector and government. *excludes child care due to confidentiality. +excludes private education due to confidentiality. **public education only due to confidentiality.

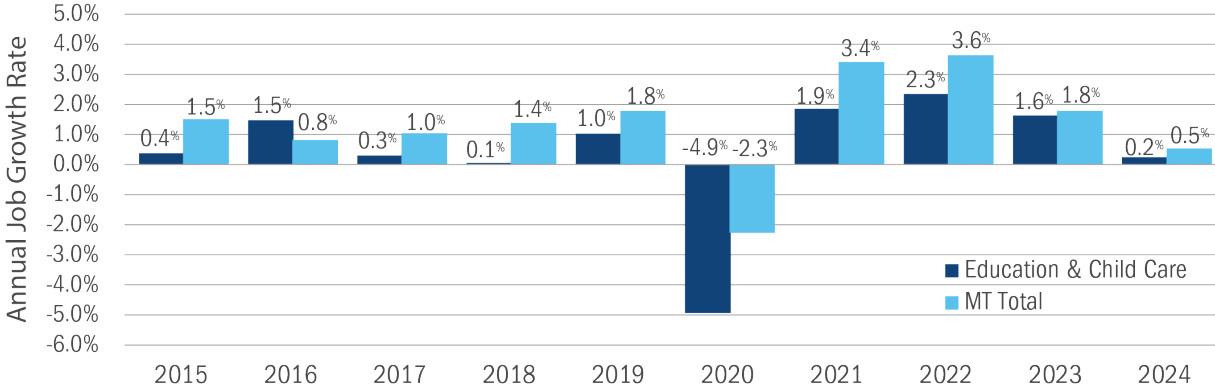
While Education and Child Care sector jobs are found throughout the state, 45% are located in three urban counties. About one-third of education and child care jobs are in Gallatin or Missoula counties, where the state’s flagship universities are located. Another 12% of jobs are in the state’s largest population center, Yellowstone County. Yellowstone County has the largest public K-12 school system, with over 16,000 students enrolled in the Billings Public School System.²



EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE LABOR MARKET TRENDS

The Education and Child Care sector has grown slower than the Montana average over the last ten years, averaging 0.4% growth per year compared with 1.4% growth across the state. The sector added jobs every year since 2015, except for 2020 when pandemic-related school and child care closures resulted in employment declines. Employment gradually recovered, returning to pre-pandemic levels in 2023. Figure 4 shows the annual employment growth in the Education and Child Care sector relative to the statewide average since 2015.

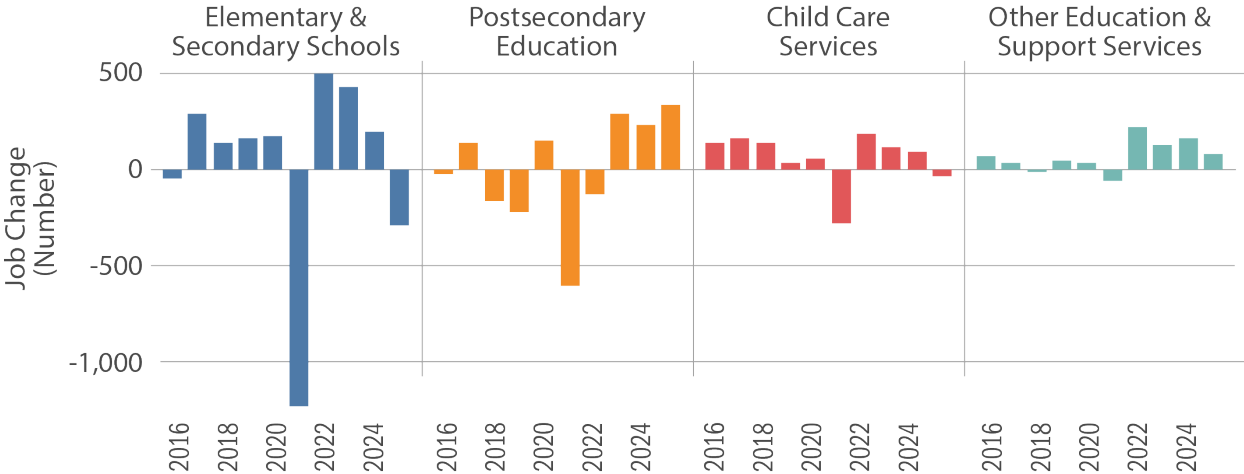
FIGURE 4: EDUCATION & CHILD CARE SECTOR JOB GROWTH IN MONTANA



Source: U.S. BLS LAUS and QCEW, Includes both private sector and government.

Education and Child Care job growth varied by education type, as shown in Figure 5. Other education and support services added the most jobs over the last five years, gaining a total of 540 jobs. Employment at elementary and secondary schools remain below their 2019 levels. Five-year job growth across all education and child care types was modest, with the entire sector adding only 400 jobs over the last five years.

FIGURE 5: ANNUAL JOB GROWTH BY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE SUBINDUSTRY, MONTANA

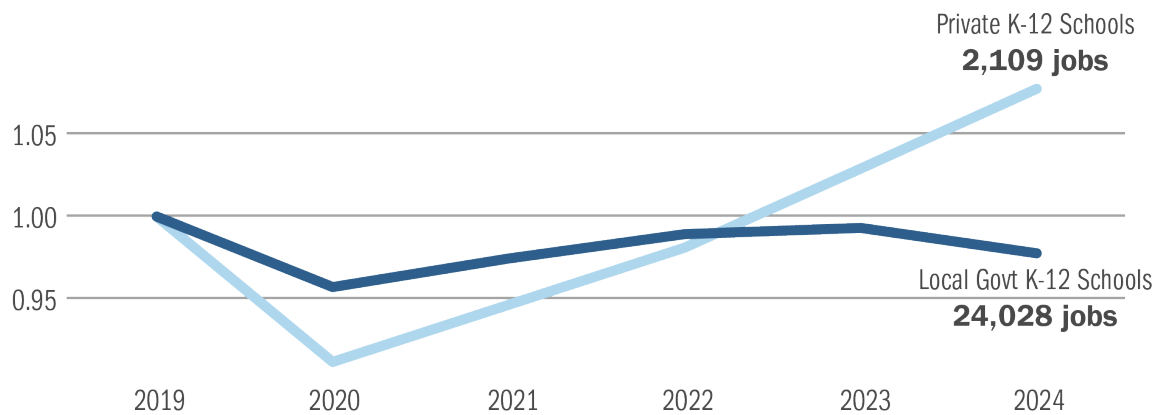


Source: BLS QCEW, Public and private sector. Growth from 2015 through 2024.

Montana’s elementary and secondary schools experienced significant job loss during 2020, as school closures and remote learning disrupted the traditional learning environment. Job growth in 2021 through 2023 mitigated some of the pandemic-related job losses, but employment remained below 2019 levels. Further job losses in 2024 are related to expiring federal pandemic relief funding, inflation, and declining enrollment leading to budget concerns for many public schools.³

Figure 6 shows elementary and secondary jobs indexed to 2019 levels. Public school employment remains below pre-pandemic levels, while jobs in private elementary and secondary schools recovered job losses by 2023. These public school job losses are unique to Montana. Nationally, the number of jobs in both public and private K-12 schools increased over the last five years.

FIGURE 6: JOBS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR K-12 SCHOOLS, INDEXED TO 2019, MONTANA



Source: BLS QCEW.

Child care employment experienced similar declines to public education in 2020 caused by pandemic-related closures and enrollment declines. The number of licensed child care providers fell by more than 50 percent in April 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, compared with a year earlier.⁴ Job growth returned in 2021, as federal investment helped stabilize the child care industry.⁵ Child care employment reached pre-pandemic levels in 2022, and growth continued in 2023.

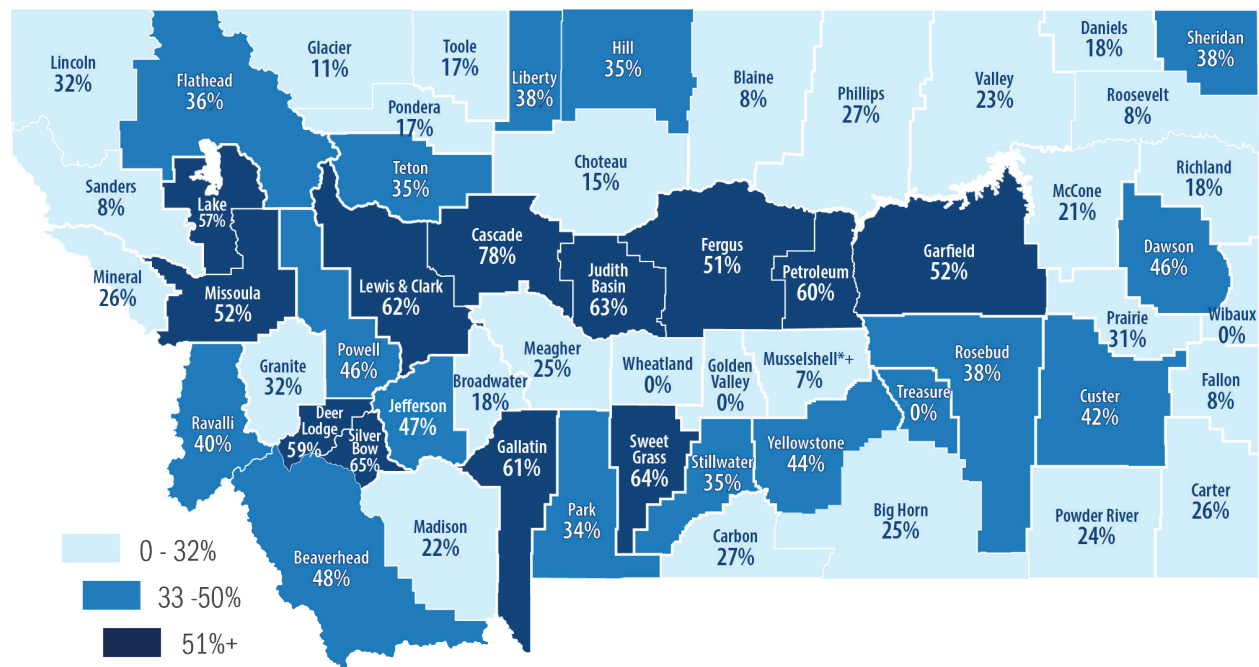
Child care jobs edged down in 2024 after several years of growth, coinciding with the expiration of temporary federal ARPA relief dollars that had helped stabilize wages and program finances.⁶ However, despite recent declines, child care employment has grown faster than the sector average over the last ten years, averaging 2% annual job growth. Long-term job growth helps to address well-documented child care shortages throughout the state.⁷

Job growth in postsecondary education has been inconsistent over the past decade. Public colleges make up 86% of Montana’s postsecondary education jobs. Employment at these institutions declined in five of the last ten years. Job losses at public colleges in 2017 and 2018 coincided with a period of declining enrollment and state budget cuts.⁸ Losses continued in 2020 and 2021 due to pandemic-related furloughs and hiring freezes as well as some loss due to normal personnel management.⁹ Over the past three years, public college employment increased as student enrollment recovered from its pandemic low.¹⁰ Employment among public postsecondary institutions reached pre-pandemic levels in 2024.

CHILD CARE CAPACITY FALLS SHORT OF DEMAND ACROSS MONTANA

Licensed child care capacity has been consistently undersupplied despite its essential role in supporting the statewide workforce. In 2025, licensed child care capacity met only 46% of estimated demand. Child care shortages exist across the state, with nearly 51% of counties identified as child care deserts – meaning supply meets less than a third of estimated demand. The most significant unmet demand occurs in the more rural areas of the state. Approximately 20% of children under age six live in a county designated as a child care desert. The map below shows licensed child care capacity as a percent of demand by county.

FIGURE 7: CHILD CARE CAPACITY AS A PERCENT OF DEMAND FROM CHILDREN UNDER AGE 6 BY COUNTY



Source: MTDLI analysis of child care capacity data provided by MTDPHHS through 12/2025. MTDLI childcare demand calculation based on U.S. Census Bureau 2024 Population Estimates Program (PEP) data provided by Montana KIDS Count and 2020-2024 American Community Survey (ACS) data produced by the U.S. Census Bureau.

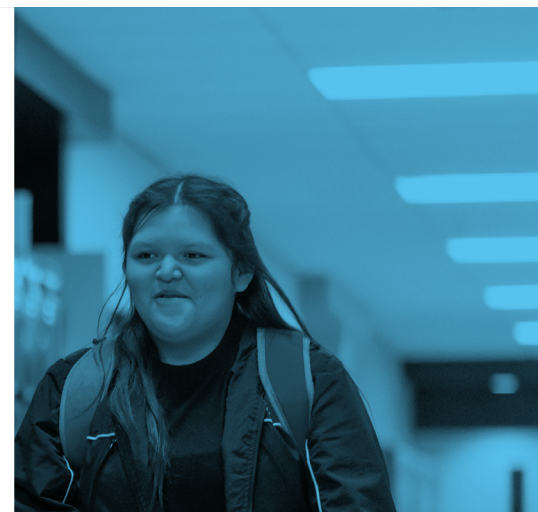
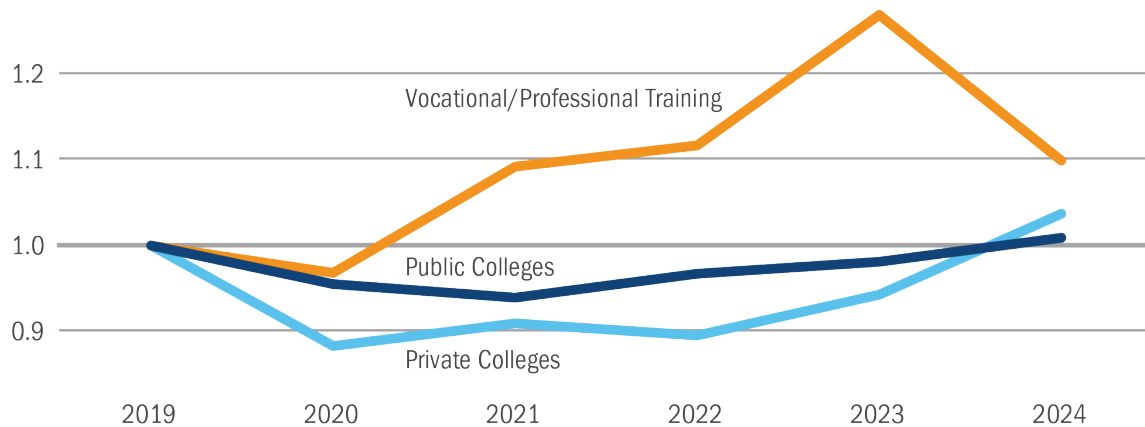


Figure 8 shows postsecondary education job growth indexed to 2019 levels. Both public and private sector colleges experienced pandemic-related job loss but have returned to pre-pandemic employment levels, similar to national trends. Vocational and professional training organizations had the fastest job growth over the last five years, with some recent decline in 2024. Job growth averaged over 2% per year since 2019, similar to national trends.

FIGURE 8: JOBS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, INDEXED TO 2019, MONTANA



Source: BLS QCEW. Colleges include NAICS 6112 (Junior Colleges) and 6113 (Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools). Vocational/Professional training includes 6115 (Technical and Trade Schools). NAICS 6114 (Business Schools and Computer and Management Training) is not disclosable and excluded from the figure.

Job growth in other education and support services has been strong over the last ten years. In Montana, this subsector grew at an average annual rate of 5.4% since 2014, compared to 4.2% nationally. Other schools and instruction include non-academic training, such as sports camps, music programs, and driving schools. Educational support services provide non-instructional support for education.

Over the next ten years Education and Child Care employment is projected to grow by 0.2% per year, slightly below the sector's long-run average. Statewide employment is projected to grow by 1.1% annually. Most of the job growth is expected to occur in education rather than child care. National estimates project slow education job growth and negative child care job growth throughout the U.S. over the next decade.¹¹

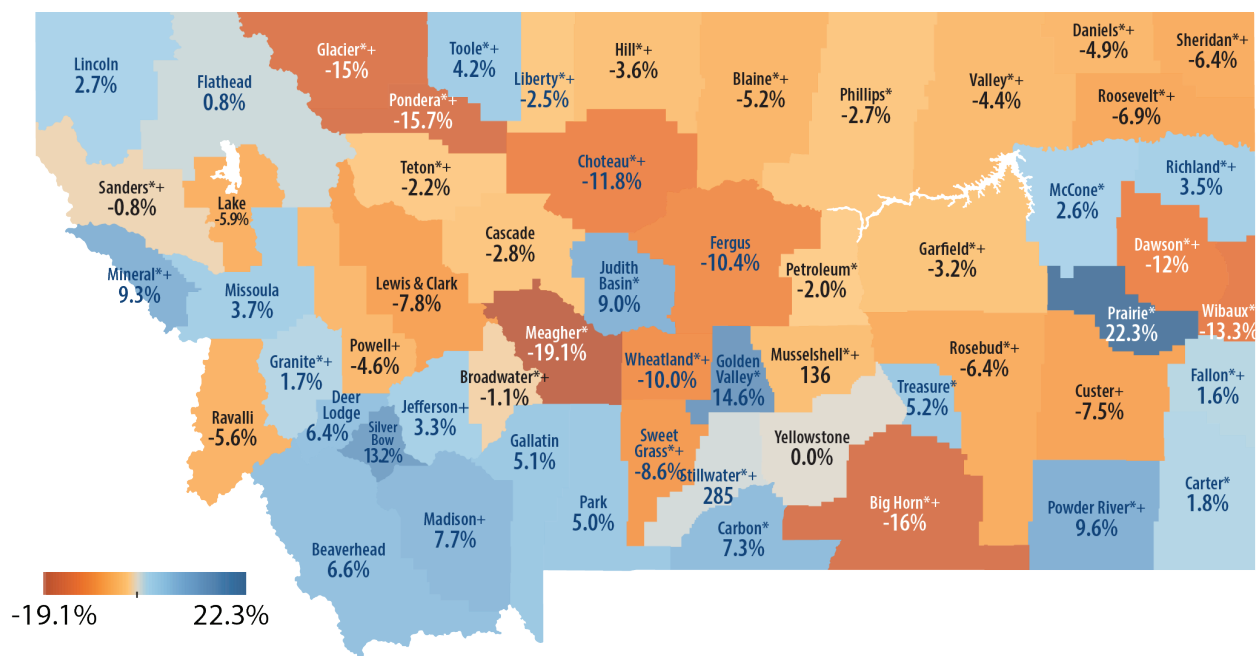


REGIONAL TRENDS IN EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Education and Child Care job growth has been slow or declining in most areas of the state over the last five years. Sector job growth was relatively slow even in urban areas with high levels of migration, due in part to budget constraints and workforce shortages. Public education job growth is limited by chronic teacher shortages – particularly in rural communities.¹² Child care providers also report difficulty recruiting and retaining workers, particularly for lower-wage teaching assistant positions.¹³ Education and child care sector job growth has been strongest in the areas of the state with a larger presence of postsecondary education.

Gallatin and Missoula counties added the most jobs over the last five years among Montana counties, adding about 390 and 230 jobs, respectively. Job growth in Gallatin and Missoula counties was from the university system, with over half of the job growth attributed to public colleges. Lewis and Clark County had the largest loss of 180 jobs since 2019, with large declines in the public school system.¹⁴ Figure 9 shows the average annual education and child care job growth rate by county since 2019.

FIGURE 9: EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE JOB GROWTH BY COUNTY, 2019-2024



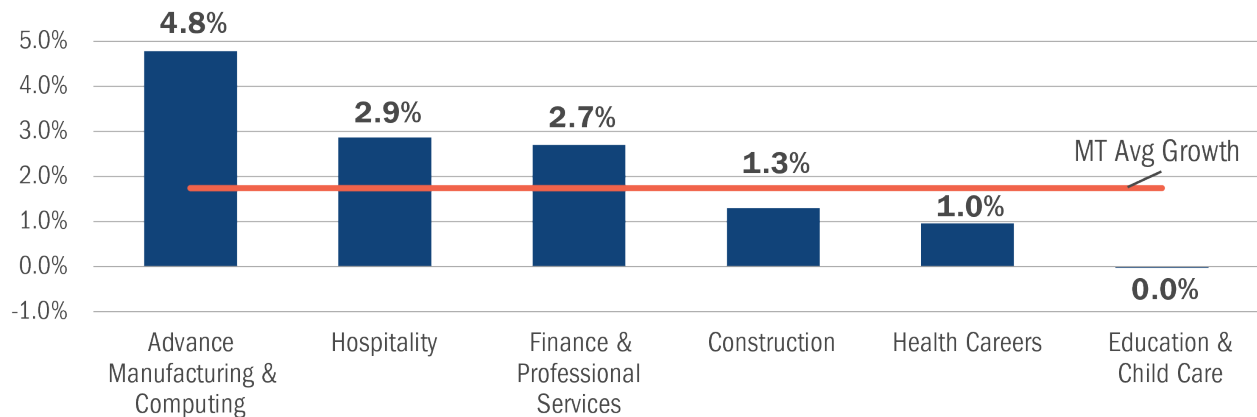
Source: BLS QCEW. *excludes child care due to confidentiality. +excludes private education due to confidentiality. **public education only due to confidentiality.

Education and Child Care is projected to continue to grow slowly throughout Montana, due in part to the limited workforce supply. Over the next ten years education and child care employment is projected to grow by less than 0.5% in all regions of the state. Most of the statewide growth will be in the Northwest region, including Missoula and Flathead counties, and the Southwest region, including Gallatin, Silver Bow, and Lewis and Clark counties. The rest of the state is projected to see near-zero growth, following long-term job losses in the rural areas of the state.¹⁵

WAGE GROWTH TRENDS IN EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Wages in the Education and Child Care sector have grown near the same pace as inflation over the last five years, suggesting there has been no change in standard of living for education and child care workers. Real wage growth averaged -0.03% per year since 2019, similar to the national average for these jobs. Real wage growth across all Montana jobs averaged 1.7% per year. Figure 10 shows the average annual real wage growth for the 406 JOBS sectors. Education and Child Care had the slowest wage growth of these high-demand sectors over the five years.

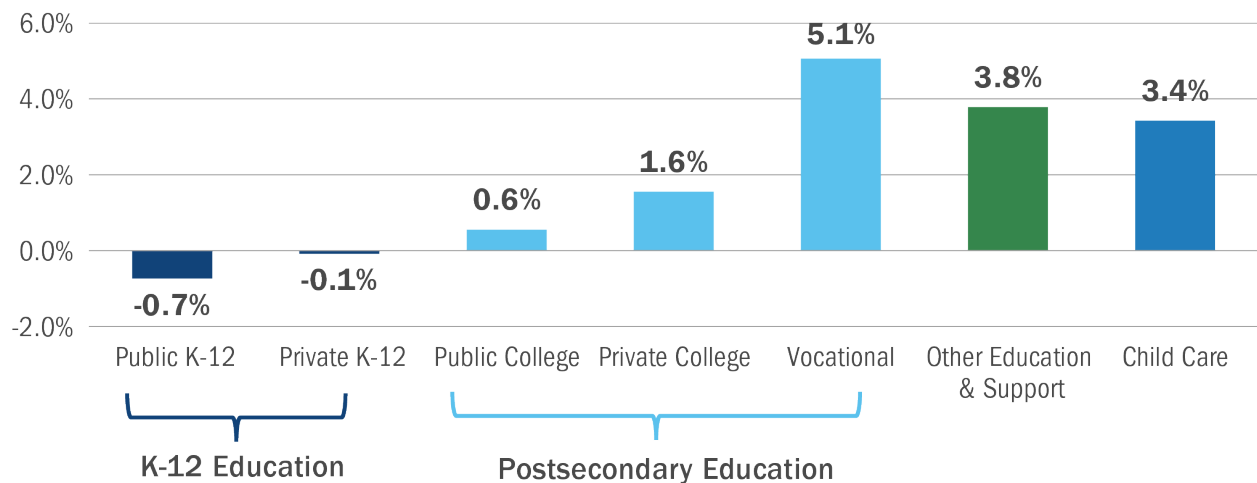
FIGURE 10: 406 JOBS SECTOR AVERAGE ANNUAL REAL WAGE GROWTH, 2019 TO 2024



Source: U.S. BLS QCEW and CPI-U, Includes both private sector and government.

Real wage growth varies within the Education and Child Care sector. Real wage growth has been strongest in vocational training, other education and support services, and child care subsectors. However, real wage growth has fallen for K-12 education, particularly within the Montana public school system. Over the last five years, real wages have fallen 0.7% annually at these schools. Figure 11 shows the 2019 to 2024 real wage growth by Education and Childcare subsector.

FIGURE 11: EDUCATION & CHILDCARE SUBSECTOR AVERAGE ANNUAL REAL WAGE GROWTH, 2019 TO 2024

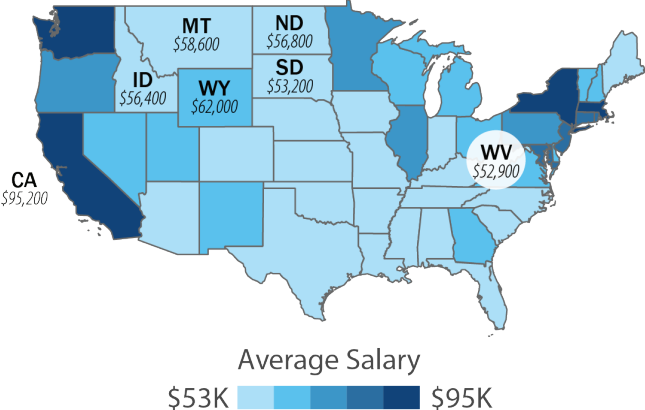


Source: U.S. BLS QCEW and CPI-U, Includes both private sector and government.

MONTANA TEACHER COMPENSATION

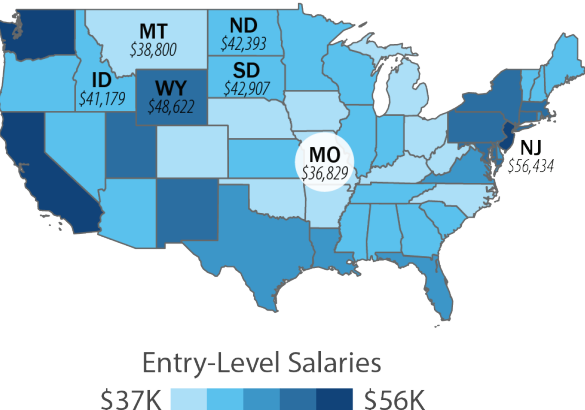
Workforce challenges are well documented in Montana’s public K-12 educational system. Concerns about recruitment and retention of Montana’s elementary and secondary educators has shifted policy focus to teacher wages, where reports continuously show Montana teacher salaries rank low compared to other states. Montana teachers earned \$58,600 on average during the 2022-23 school year, ranking 34th of all 50 states. Entry-level teachers earned \$38,800, ranking 46th across states. Figure 12 shows teachers’ average and entry-level wages by state.

FIGURE 12A. AVERAGE SALARY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS BY STATE



Source: Montana estimate from OPI and DLI UI wage data match summarized by MTDLI. State estimates from NEA.

FIGURE 12B. ENTRY-LEVEL SALARIES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS BY STATE



Source: Montana estimate from OPI and DLI UI wage data match summarized by MTDLI. State estimates from NEA.

Persistent workforce shortages throughout the state have driven significant wage gains as businesses compete for a limited supply of workers. However, Montana teachers have not experienced the same rapid wage growth. Between the 2017-18 and 2022-23 school years, real wages fell by 1.7% per year for Montana teachers. Negative real wage growth means that prices went up faster than wages, reducing purchasing power and standard of living.

Persistently low salaries contribute to teacher turnover. About 8% of teachers leave the public school system each year. Of those leaving the profession, 40% work for a different Montana employer, and at least 13% are employed outside the state. The rest are either self-employed, retired, taking care of family, or not working for other reasons. For teachers who remain in the profession, many work a second job to supplement their teaching salary. About 26% of Montana’s full-time general education teachers earned income from a second job during the 2022-23 year. Many teachers worked a second job during the school year, not just during the summer months.

House Bill 252, the Student and Teacher Advancement for Results and Success (STARS) Act, enacted in the 2025 legislative session, aims to mitigate these workforce challenges. The Act invests \$100 million in the public school system, with a primary goal to increase starting teacher salaries. The Act also required the Montana Department of Labor & Industry (MTDLI) to establish a statewide credential database, which provides clear pathways for students to earn credentials that lead to in-demand careers. Schools may receive funding incentives, called Future Ready payments, for students who earn industry-recognized or postsecondary credits. Included in the state’s credential registry are programs to support attainment of child care credentials while in high school.

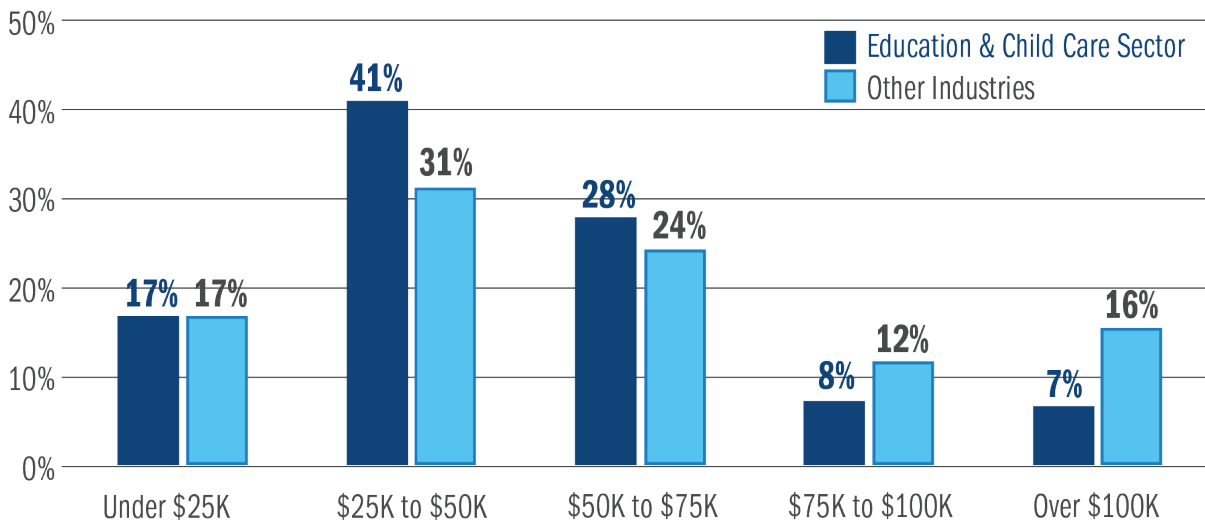
For more information, see the Montana Teacher Compensation Report, available at lmi.mt.gov, or by scanning the QR code



EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE SECTOR WORKERS PROFILE

Prime Age Workforce	Highly Educated Workforce	Predominately female workforce	Work full-time or less
67% are between 25 and 54.	64% have earned a bachelor's degree or more.	71% of education and child care workers are women.	57% work 40 hours per week, 31% work less than 40 hours per week.

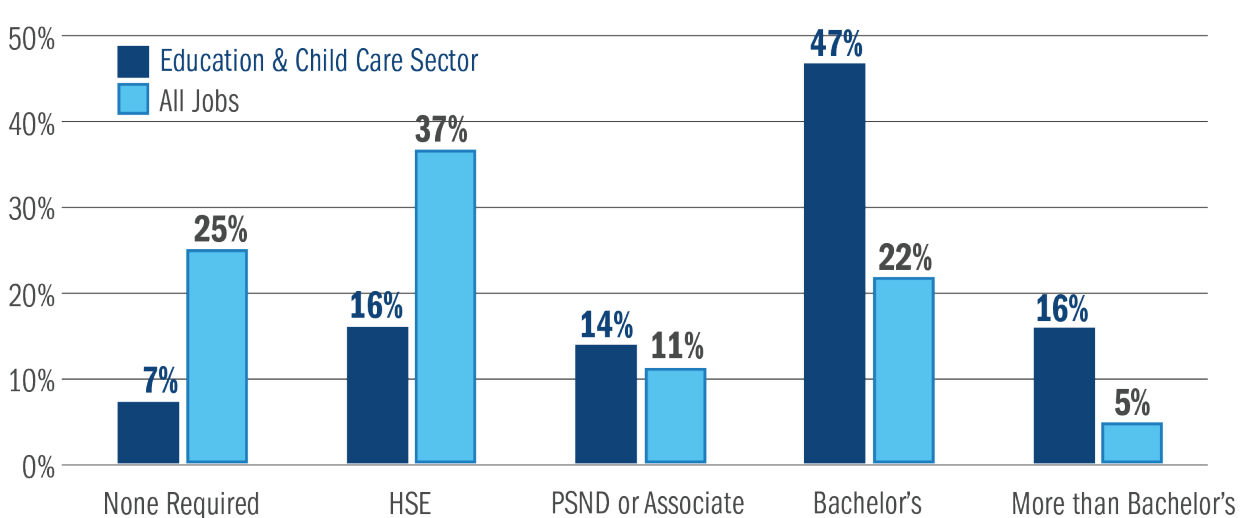
EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE ANNUAL EARNINGS FOR FULL-TIME WORKERS



Source: CPS ASEC 2021-2024, IPUMS.

High share of Education and Child Care occupations typically requires a postsecondary degree for job entry – 47% of jobs need a bachelor's degree and 16% need a graduate degree.

SHARE OF MONTANA JOBS BY TYPICAL EDUCATION NEEDED FOR JOB ENTRY

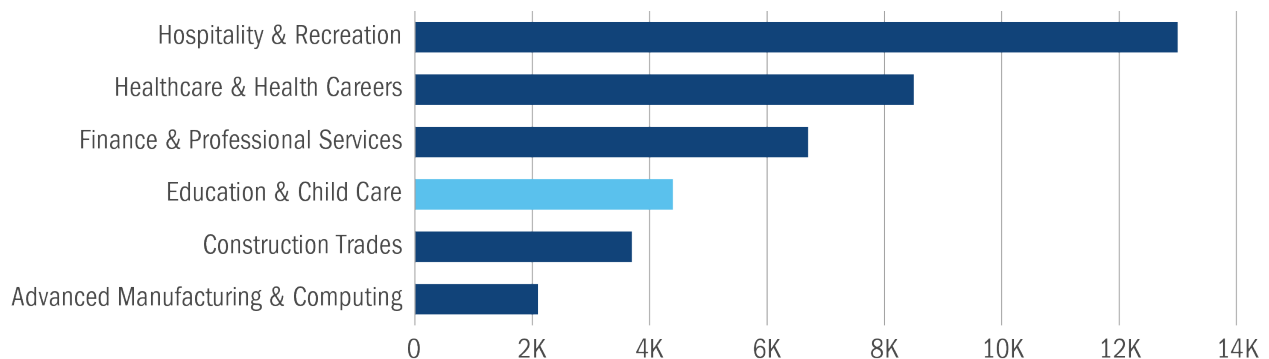


Source: OEWS with typical education needed for entry defined by the BLS.

LOOKING AHEAD: EDUCATION & CHILD CARE WORKER DEMAND

Montana's Education and Child Care sector plays a key role in Montana's economy. Continued growth in education and child care will depend upon the availability of a highly trained workforce to fill job openings generated by worker turnover and industry growth. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry (MTDLI) estimates 4,400 annual job openings in the Education and Child Care sector over the next ten years in a variety of different roles, primarily to replace workers who leave the industry.

FIGURE 13: ANNUAL PROJECTED JOB OPENINGS IN 406 JOBS SECTORS, 2024-2034



Source: MTDLI Forecast of Job Openings by Industry 2024-2034.

Figure 14 shows the top ten most common occupations in the Education and Child Care sector along with wages, training requirements, and projected annual job openings for each occupation. Total projected openings include those generated through growth and turnover. Turnover occurs as people change careers, retire, move, or otherwise leave the labor market.

FIGURE 14: TOP 10 LARGEST OCCUPATIONS IN THE EDUCATION & CHILD CARE SECTOR, 2024

Detailed Occupation	Employed	Avg Wage	Annual Total Openings 2024-2034 (incl Transfers)	Annual Growth and Replacement Openings 2024-2034	Projected Growth 2024-2034	Training Requirements
Elementary School Teachers ¹	4,510	\$58,320	290	130	1.1%	Bachelor's
Teaching Assistants, <i>Except Postsecondary</i>	4,160	\$33,720	520	230	-0.2%	Some college, no degree
Secondary School Teachers ²	3,500	\$57,840	220	100	1.2%	Bachelor's
Middle School Teachers ²	2,520	\$62,000	130	60	1.1%	Bachelor's
Substitute Teachers	2,210	\$30,050	120	60	5.3%	Bachelor's
Janitors and Cleaners, <i>Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners</i>	1,800	\$38,310	240	120	2.2%	
Child Care Workers	1,660	\$32,820	200	70	-9.2%	HSE
Office Clerks, General	1,200	\$42,500	100	50	-7.6%	HSE
Secretaries & Admin Assistants	1,010	\$40,840	110	60	-2.2%	HSE
Preschool Teachers ¹	1,010	\$36,920	130	50	-1.4%	Associate

Source: MTDLI Analysis of 2024 OEWS and Occupational Projections 2024-2034. HSE = High school diploma or equivalent. PSND = postsecondary nondegree award. 1. *Except special education.* 2. *Except Special and Career/Technical Education.*

The most common occupations in the Education and Child Care sector are teaching and direct care roles working with students and children. Teachers make up over half of all jobs in the K-12 education system – including elementary, middle, and high schools. Preschool teachers and child care workers are the most common roles within the child care industry.

Teaching assistants have the most projected job openings over the next decade. These assistants work alongside teachers in elementary and secondary schools to assist with classroom responsibilities. Most job openings are generated by turnover as workers move up the career ladder, change careers, or exit the labor force. Education and Child Care also rely on administrative and other non-teaching occupations, such as janitors and cleaners, office clerks, and administrative assistants.

As the Education and Child Care sector adapts to meet Montana's changing needs, the demand for certain workers is expected to accelerate. Figure 15 shows the top ten fastest growing occupations in the sector. Many of the fastest growing jobs are postsecondary teaching positions, including health specialties, nursing, engineering, biological science, and business teachers. These tend to be high-paying and require advanced degrees. Exercise trainers and group fitness instructors are the only occupations not requiring postsecondary education.



The Education and Child Care sector include daycares, schools, universities, and other educational establishments. While teaching and direct care occupations are mostly commonly associated with the Education and Child Care sector, supportive and administrative roles comprise a significant portion of the sector's employment.

Direct Care and Education Careers: child care workers, general education teachers, counselors, professors, paraeducators, nurses, special education teachers, etc.

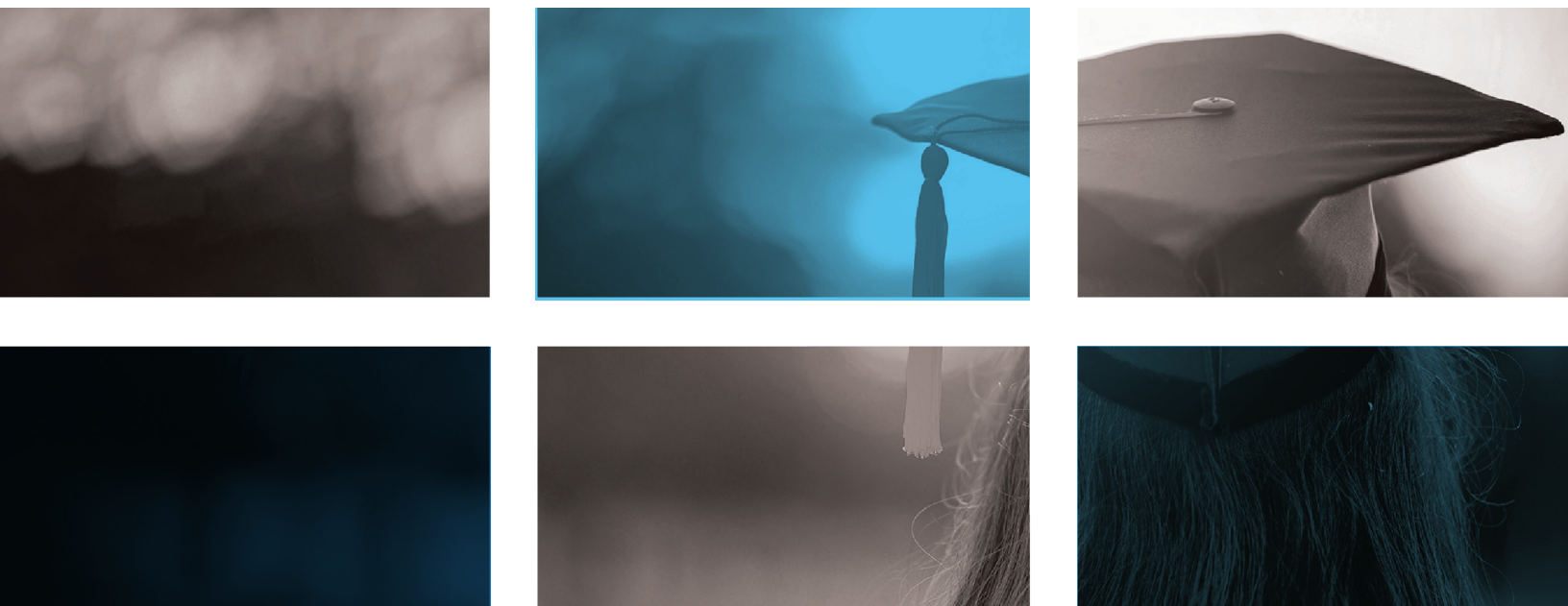
Supportive and Administrative Careers like bookkeepers, janitors, office clerks, principals, superintendents, bus drivers, and food preparation occupations.

Some supportive occupations in the Education and Child Care sector are also employed in other industries. For example, office clerks and janitors are also employed in the Financial and Professional Services sector. Job demand presented in this report is specific to the Education and Child Care sector and does not include job openings projected to occur for the same occupation in other industries.

FIGURE 15: TOP 10 FASTEST GROWING EDUCATION & CHILD CARE OCCUPATIONS IN MONTANA, 2024.

Occupation	Projected Growth 2024-2034	Annual Total (incl Transfers) Openings 2024-2034	Annual Growth and Replacement Openings 2024-2034	2024 Average Wage	Requirements
Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	20.8%	30	20	\$123,940	Phd/Professional + <5 yrs exp.
Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary	19.7%	20	10	\$85,700	Phd/Professional + <5 yrs exp.
Engineering Teachers, Postsecondary	11.0%	10	10	\$132,790	Phd/Professional
Biological Science Teachers, Postsecondary	10.4%	20	10	\$106,850	Phd/Professional
Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	8.7%	30	10	\$37,120	HSE
Business Teachers, Postsecondary	8.5%	20	10	\$111,350	Phd/Professional
Coaches and Scouts	7.5%	120	60	\$45,820	Bachelor's
Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors	6.8%	60	20	\$65,450	Master's
Teaching Assistants, Postsecondary	6.0%	70	30	\$36,630	Bachelor's
Substitute Teachers	5.3%	120	60	\$30,050	Bachelor's

Source: MTDLI Analysis of 2024 OEWS and Occupational Projections 2024-2034. HSE= High School Diploma or equivalent



EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE WORKFORCE TRAINING

The Education and Child Care sector has more projected job openings requiring a college degree (52%) than the state average (19%), indicating greater education and training requirements. Very few education and child care job openings are met through a certification alone (<1%). There are a variety of pathways to prepare education and child care workers, including through the state’s K-12 education system, postsecondary education, registered apprenticeship programs, and certificate and technical education programs. Figure 16 estimates how well postsecondary training pathways meet statewide and regional demand for select high-demand education and child care occupations.

FIGURE 16: SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE OCCUPATIONS FROM THE MONTANA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

Occupation		Apprent. Status	Statewide	Northwest	Southwest	North Central	South Central	Eastern
HSE	Child Care workers	Yes	Under	Under	Meets	Under	Under	Under
SCND	Teaching assistants	Possible	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under
PSND	Library technicians		Under	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under
	Child, family, and school social workers		Under	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under
	Coaches and scouts		Under	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under
Bachelor's	Elementary and middle school teachers	Yes	Meets	Meets	Over	Under	Meets	Under
	Preschool and kindergarten teachers	Yes	Under	Under	Over	Under	Under	Under
	Secondary school teachers	Yes	Under	Over	Meets	Under	Under	Under
	Special Ed teachers	Yes	Under	Under	Meets	Under	Under	Under
	Substitute teachers		Under	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under
Master's	Education and child care administrators	Possible	Meets	Meets	Over	Under	Meets	Under
	Educational, guidance, and career counselors and advisors		Meets	Over	Meets	Meets	Meets	Under
	Librarians		Under	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under
PhD/Prof	Clinical, counseling, & school psychologists		Under	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under
	Postsecondary teachers		Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Over

Source: Montana Post-Secondary Workforce Report, 2022, MTDLI. MTDLI 2020-2030 Occupational Employment projections. Graduate data from IPEDS and RAPIDS. Demand is sum of occupation demand historically filled by graduates from the program according to 2015-2019 ACS IPUMS micro data. Only graduates from institutions located in the region are included in supply. HSE = High school diploma or equivalent. SCND = Some college, no degree. PSND = postsecondary nondegree award (certification).

UNDERSTANDING SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Figure 16 compares projected occupational demand to the estimated supply of graduates from Montana's postsecondary schools, registered apprenticeships, and other training programs. Supply estimates only include graduates from institutions in Montana. Employers may also fill job openings through in-migration, career transitions, or workers trained outside the state.

Under Supplied: Projected job openings exceed the number of graduates historically entering the occupation. This suggests potential workforce shortages and a need for expanded training capacity, recruitment, or reskilling.

Meets Demand: Graduate output is generally aligned with projected occupational demand. Current training capacity appears sufficient to support workforce demand if trends remain stable.

Over Supplied: Montana's postsecondary workforce system produces enough graduates to fill projected job openings for the occupation. Demand for the occupation is based on historical employment patterns and does not account for current job vacancies or potential future investments and emerging trends.

Most of the high-demand education and child care occupations are undersupplied, including many teaching roles. Child care workers, teaching assistants, and preschool, kindergarten, secondary school, special education, and substitute teachers are undersupplied. Elementary teachers meet demand in Figure 16, but the number of college students graduating with a degree in elementary education has fallen over recent years.¹⁶ Many non-teaching occupations are also undersupplied, including social workers and psychologists who provide social and mental health services to students and their families. Librarians, library technicians, coaches and scouts are also considered high demand and undersupplied occupations.

Workforce challenges in the state's public K-12 educational system are widely reported, reinforcing that teachers are undersupplied in the state. Statewide, there has been a decline in initial school licensure, increased reports on elementary and secondary school teacher vacancies, and a steep rise in the use of emergency authorizations to fill critical roles.¹⁷ This limited supply of teachers impacts the entire pipeline of teaching positions, from teaching assistants to teachers to substitute teachers. To help build the pipeline, MTDLI's established a registered apprenticeship program for teachers, with the first cohort of apprentices beginning in summer and fall 2026. This teacher apprenticeship program trains apprentices to become licensed K-12 educators in Montana.¹⁸

Preschool and kindergarten teachers are undersupplied occupations that teach Montana's youngest students. Many of these teachers are trained through early childhood education programs in Montana's postsecondary system. Kindergarten teachers typically need a bachelor's degree for job entry and earn an average wage of \$54,790, consistent with other elementary school teachers. Preschool teachers typically hold an associate degree for job entry, and earn \$36,920, significantly lower than teachers at the K-12 system. Preschool teacher wages are only slightly higher than wages earned by child care workers.

Montana's Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program helps build the teacher pipeline by offering an earn-while-you-learn apprenticeship program for aspiring K-12 educators. Apprentices receive hands-on experience under the guidance of experienced mentor teachers while completing academic coursework through accredited higher education partners. Those successfully completing the program will become licensed K-12 educators in Montana. This workforce training prepares future educators statewide, with the program set to train apprentices in urban, rural, and tribal communities.

Licensed child care in Montana has been consistently undersupplied, meeting only an estimated 46% of demand.¹⁹ This shortage is driven in part by a lack of well-trained caregivers. Child care workers are an undersupplied occupation, meaning the postsecondary system does not produce enough early childhood education graduates to meet demand. To help address the shortage, the MTDLI has partnered with the Montana Department of Health and Human Services and the Early Childhood Project to develop a Child Development Associate (CDA) pre-apprenticeship program. Graduates of the CDA pre-apprenticeship will be eligible to register for the Child Development Specialist Registered Apprenticeship Program to continue their career development.

For over two decades, the Montana Early Childhood Apprenticeship (MECA) program has served as a pathway for training professional childcare workers in the state. More than 190 apprentices have completed the program since 2000. In 2025, 35 active apprentices are working in 15 child care facilities across Montana, placing MECA among the top 10 largest apprenticeship programs statewide.²⁰

Montana's Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FCS) also provides a Career and Technical Education pathway for Early Childhood Care and Education and Teaching and Training. FCS is found in middle and secondary schools with the focus on life literacy and workforce development. This pathway helps interested students understand and prepare for a wide range of careers and postsecondary education programs related to the Education and Childcare sector.

CONCLUSION

Montana's Education and Child Care sector cares for and educates Montana's workforce, making the industry vital to the state economy. Child care is also essential as it allows parents the option to be fully engaged in Montana's labor force. The essential services of this sector mean that education and child care jobs span the entire state, with a trained workforce needed throughout every part of Montana. Continuing growth in the Education and Child Care sector will require aligning the sector's training needs with differing recruitment and retention challenges across urban and rural areas. It will also require attention to salaries, which are relatively low compared with other industries with high workforce training requirements. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry remains committed to investing in workforce development and training opportunities for the state's essential Education and Child Care sector.²¹

ENDNOTES

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