

3rd Annual  
Early Childhood  
Summit Impact  
*Report*



THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA  
INSTITUTE for EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
RESEARCH ● DEMONSTRATION ● OUTREACH

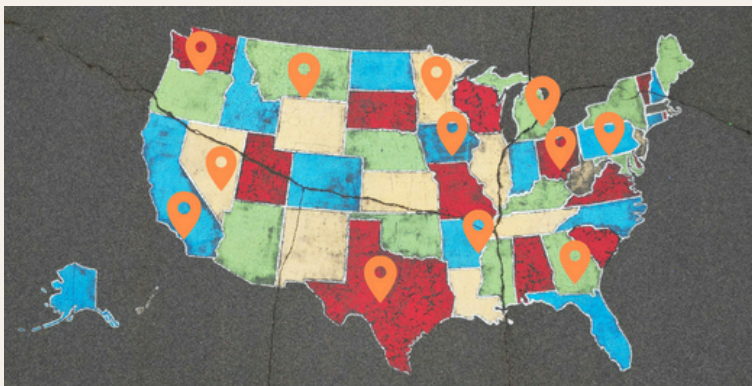
# The Early Childhood Summit *in review*



From April 3–5, 2025, the University of Montana’s Institute for Early Childhood Education hosted the 3rd Annual Early Childhood Education Summit, bringing together over **230 early childhood professionals** representing **12 states** and **39% of Montana counties**. This dynamic convening fostered meaningful collaboration, highlighted HB352 implementation successes, and offered **more than 15 professional development sessions** focused on advancing equitable, high-quality early learning across communities.

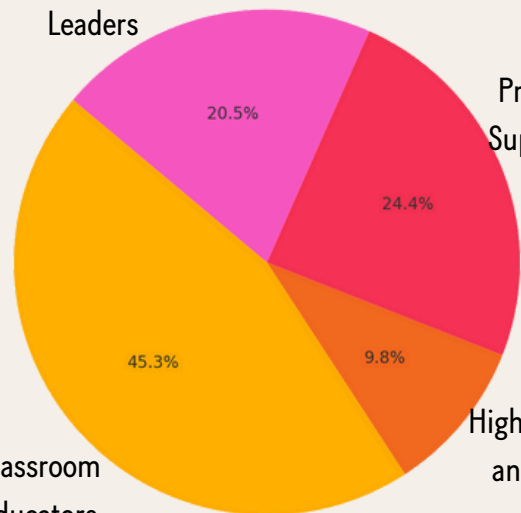
A standout moment was the screening of the *Make A Circle* documentary, which moved participants to reflect deeply, share openly, and reaffirm our collective commitment to supporting young children and their families through inclusive, relationship-centered practices.

## Representation by the Numbers



★ **12** States Represented

Program and Policy  
Leaders



Classroom  
Educators

Higher Education  
and Students

# The Early Childhood Summit

## *highlights*



- **Expanded Professional Development:** Through our partnership with the Early Childhood Project-Based Learning Conference, the Summit offered 17 professional development sessions eligible for Early Childhood Project (ECP) credit, featuring hands-on learning, classroom visits, and educator-led workshops.
- **Inspiring Keynote:** We were honored to welcome Dr. Roberta Golinkoff, podcaster, author, and Unidel H. Rodney Sharp Chair in the School of Education at the University of Delaware—whose keynote address explored the science of learning through the lens of playful, purposeful instruction.
- **Poster Session Showcase:** Attendees explored over 20 poster presentations highlighting early learning research, innovative classroom practices, and powerful community partnerships from across the region.
- **Student Voice in Action:** A memorable moment included a six-year-old LAB School student taking questions from the audience and sharing his firsthand experiences with project-based learning—reminding us of the joy and authenticity young children bring to the learning process.
- **Spotlight on Literacy Collaboration:** Five community-school partnerships from across Montana shared stories of collaboration and impact, highlighting local innovations in early literacy practice and family engagement.
- **Elevating Statewide Standards:** A panel of Montana early childhood leaders presented their vision and progress on updating the Montana Early Learning Standards, reinforcing our shared commitment to a comprehensive birth-through-third-grade learning continuum.



*Thank you so much for all of your hard work. It was all amazing. When I walked in Thursday night to the book/tree theme and the string quartet, I was giddy. What a wonderful way to make early educators feel valued. Truly wonderful.*

*I really enjoyed Dr Golnikoff's high energy and inspirational talk! It validated my belief in child-centered, playful, joyful learning.*

*Absolutely amazing and eye opening documentary. EVERYONE needs to see this.*

*How can one even express the joy of the LAB School, the children, the teachers, the environment- outstanding, and ever exploring what is best for children and learning!*

234

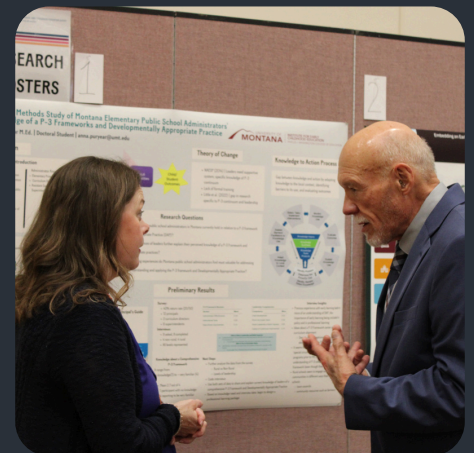
attendees

39%

of Montana Counties represented

17

Professional Development Sessions



*3rd Annual Early Childhood Education Summit April 3rd, 4th and 5th, 2025*

# We would like to thank all our sponsors for their generous support



## Acknowledgements

Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation

The O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation

Early Childhood Project Based Learning

Montana Advocates for Children

School Administrators of Montana

Missoula County Public Schools

Zero to Five Montana

Office of Public Instruction

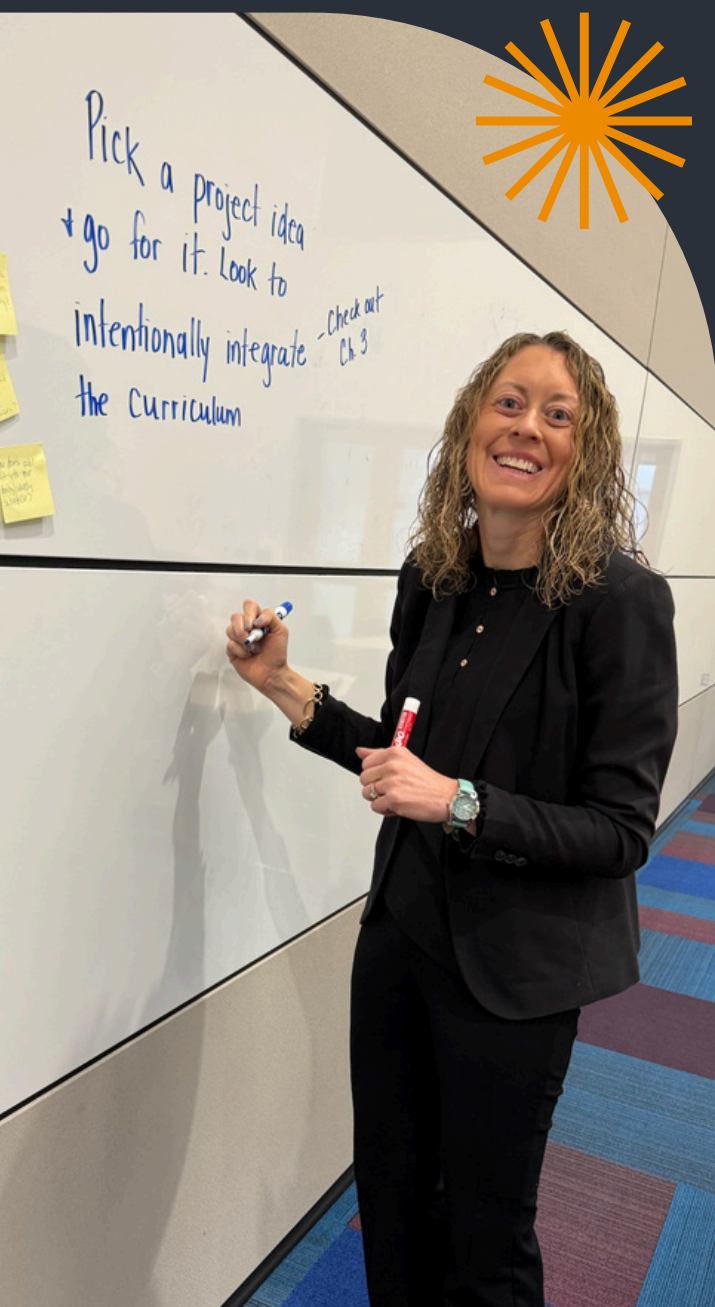
Bozeman Reads

Montana DPHHS

Great Falls Public Schools

Montana Bright Futures Birth to Five Grant

Save the Date



4th Annual Early Childhood Education Summit April 16th, 17th & 18th, 2026