

2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR IMPACT REPORT



**Montana Council for
Economic Education**

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YEAR IN REVIEW



The Montana Council for Economic Education proudly reflects on a year of meaningful impact, expanded reach, and continued dedication to preparing Montana's youth for economic success.

This year, MCEE programs reached thousands of students across the state, offering engaging, practical, and relevant lessons in personal finance, economics, and entrepreneurship. Through teacher training workshops, statewide student competitions like the Montana Economics Challenge and the Personal Finance Challenge, and classroom support initiatives, we've seen a growing demand for tools that build financial literacy and economic understanding.

We are especially proud of our work in rural communities—ensuring that every Montana student, regardless of geography, has access to high-quality economic education. Thanks to the support of our partners and the dedication of educators, MCEE continues to serve as a trusted resource and catalyst for preparing the next generation of informed citizens and confident decision-makers.

As we look ahead to next year, we are energized by the momentum we've built and grateful for the community that makes this work possible. Together, we are equipping Montana students with the skills they need to thrive in a complex and changing world.

Dax Schieffer, Executive Director



87

Participating
schools



4,921

Students
served



5

Annual
programs



106

Teacher
partnerships



Big Sky Biz Sim is an in-class business simulation where students make all of the operating decisions for their business to produce, sell and distribute widgets.

The decision inputs are then matched against other teams competing across Montana for the highest stock market price at the end of eight quarters, (weeks in the simulation).

In this partnership with First Interstate Bank, the game has been streamlined for teachers and modernized to manage against potential remote learning disruptions. The Biz Sim software and game has been in schools in Montana since 2000 with over 28,000 students participating with the support of the Montana State Chamber Foundation. It was formerly called the High School Business Challenge.

MCEE believes strongly in education through experiential learning. Students who participate will learn teamwork, communication, flexibility, problem solving, critical thinking and grit. All skills that will serve students and their future employers.

When students experience the ups and downs of their profitability based on their decisions, they not only will be taught the fundamentals of managing a business, but set in a competition, we can light the spark of entrepreneurship.



IMPACT
1,169 participants
426 teams



Sidney High



Melstone High



Sidney High



IMPACT
3,411 participants
1,281 teams



Hosted by the SIFMA Foundation in collaboration with MCEE and Glacier Banks, this competition has once again highlighted the importance of equipping our youth with practical financial skills and knowledge. The Stock Market Game allows students to delve into the intricate world of stock trading by investing a virtual \$100,000 in real-time stock markets over 9 weeks starting in October. Through this experiential learning platform, students gain in valuable insights into economics, finance, and the dynamics of the financial markets.

Students must have at least five separate stocks and/or mutual funds at the end of the simulation, so research and diversification are crucial for success. Top state winners are given cash awards thanks to the generous sponsorship of Glacier Bancorp and its Montana family of banks.

The benefits of participating in the Stock Market Game extend far beyond the competition itself. Students develop essential skills such as research, analysis, risk assessment, and decision-making, all while cultivating a deeper understanding of economic principles and market dynamics. Moreover, the experience fosters a sense of financial responsibility and prepares students for future endeavors in academia, career, and personal finance.



Dillion Middle



Skyview High



Libby High



Anaconda High



Frenchtown High



Hellgate High Success

MONTANA ECONOMICS CHALLENGE

The Montana Council for Economic Education is proud to bring economics and personal finance competitions to Montana's youth providing state competitions for the National Economics Challenge and National Personal Finance Challenge. We believe when we provide the tools to understand financial fundamentals, we have the power to improve the futures' of students, their families, and their communities.



The 2025 Adam Smith Division winners were from Hellgate High School coached by Steven Klimkiewicz. The David Ricardo 1st place team was from Sunburst and coached by Jeff Nix. In the same division, second place was from Columbia Falls coached by Becky Bates and third place was a tie with Sunburst and Flathead High School taught by Roy Antley. 2025 also had 2 teams compete in the Middle School Division from Lockwood Middle School taught by Ben Donahue.

The top teams in the Adam Smith and David Ricardo divisions competed in a regional contest to represent Montana with a chance to attend the National Economics Challenge in Atlanta. The student competitions in Montana are sponsored by BNSF, First Interstate Bank, and the Montana Financial Education Coalition.



2025 Ricardo Division 1st Place
Sunburst

2025 Smith Division 1st Place
Hellgate



IMPACT: 148 participants

Columbia Falls High



Lockwood
Middle

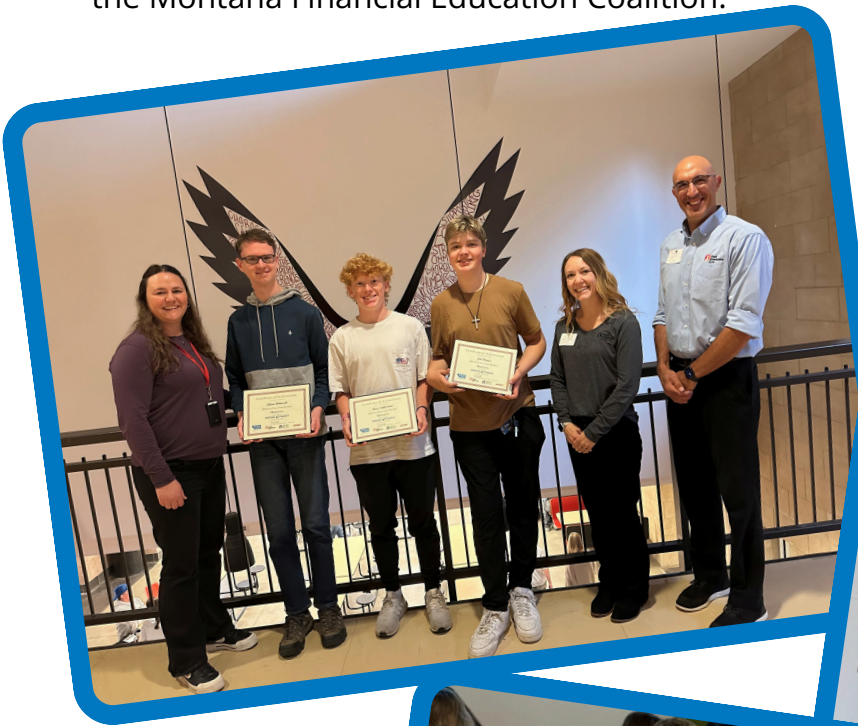


PERSONAL FINANCE CHALLENGE

Every year, the Montana Council for Economic Education, with support from the National Council for Economic Education hosts the Montana Personal Finance Challenge. The challenge is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge of personal finance by connecting with other students from across the state in an online competition.



Bozeman High School won first place in the 2025 Montana Personal Finance Challenge, followed by the 2nd and 3rd place teams from Hellgate High School in Missoula. The winning students from Bozeman represented Montana proudly at the National Personal Finance Challenge held in June in Atlanta with their teacher, Abbey Wesche. The Montana Personal Finance Challenge is sponsored by BNSF, First Interstate Bank, and the Montana Financial Education Coalition.



IMPACT:
193 participants

TEACHER TRAINING & PROGRAMS

MCEE is proud to share highlights from the recent professional development program designed to support teachers in bringing economics and personal finance to life in classrooms across the state. Hosted in partnership with the Montana State University Department of Agricultural Economics & Economics, this training brought together educators for two days of interactive sessions, meaningful discussions, and valuable resources. The agenda was full of opportunities to deepen economic knowledge, explore new teaching strategies, and build connections among colleagues.

The program opened with an introduction to Biz Sim Applied, a business simulation tool that helps students experience decision-making in real-world economic contexts. Teachers then engaged in sessions led by Dr. Myles Watts and Dr. Joe Atwood, covering core concepts like scarcity, opportunity cost, exchange, trade, and pricing. These lessons were paired with hands-on classroom strategies shared over a working lunch that featured innovative tools such as Econiful and Active Learning Labs. The agenda also included updates from Montana's Office of Public Instruction and a practical financial literacy segment on stocks and bonds from D.A. Davidson, and a lesson on AI from Kitch Walker.

One of the most memorable experiences was the field trip to West Paw Designs, a Bozeman-based manufacturer known for its sustainable and innovative pet products. Educators toured the facility to see economic concepts in action, from supply chain logistics to value-added production and entrepreneurship. This behind-the-scenes look at a Montana success story reinforced the connection between classroom lessons and the real-world economy, leaving teachers inspired with new examples to share with their students.

The day concluded with a Teacher Appreciation Dinner, where educators enjoyed fellowship and recognition for their commitment to Montana's students. The dinner was a time to celebrate the vital role teachers play in shaping the next generation's understanding of economics and personal finance.

We are grateful for the sponsors who make this teacher training possible including **ROBINHOOD®** online financial services, Visa, CEE, Reach Higher Montana, Lone Mountain Land Company, American Bank, and the Montana Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to the in-person 2 day training, MCEE also provided 24 online professional development courses and provides instruction at the MFPE Annual Educators' Conference.



"Because of the Teacher Training series, I now feel confident walking students through the logic of supply and demand using real-world scenarios. The simulation tools and lesson plans are things I'll use across multiple grade levels."

– Participating Teacher (2025 cohort)

IMPACT: 59 participants



OUR SUPPORTERS

\$10,000 - \$25,000



\$5,000 - \$9,000



\$2,000 - \$4,000



John & Marilyn Olson
Family Foundation



DENNIS & PHYLLIS
WASHINGTON
FOUNDATION

OUR SUPPORTERS

Up to \$1,500



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Troy Downing, Tim Tharp, Jeff Nix, James Thompson, Mike Green,
Kevin Guenther, Myles Watts

All MCEE Board of Directors contribute membership dues. Those that donate above that amount are reflected here.

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ABOUT CEE & MSU

The Council for Economic Education (CEE) is the leading organization in the United States that focuses on the economic and financial education of students from kindergarten through high school. For 70-plus years, our mission has been to help our kids to create a financially stable future for themselves and their families by teaching them how to think through life choices.

It is only by acquiring economic and financial literacy that children can learn that there are better options for a life well-lived, will be able to see opportunities on their horizon line and, ultimately, can grow into successful and productive adults capable of making informed and responsible decisions.

We carry out our mission by providing professional development to teachers, teaching resources across the curriculum, and nationally-normed assessment tools. We deliver our programs through in-person local workshops, partner organizations, and online. We are embracing online technology as the new vector for delivery because teachers have less time and money to spare from their classrooms for their own education.



The Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics educates students to make a difference by applying solid critical-thinking skills to address some of the world's most pressing issues.

Situated jointly within the College of Agriculture and the College of Letters and Science, our award-winning faculty members are dedicated to high-quality education, outreach and research. In pursuit of this mission, the department is reviewed biannually by a dedicated External Advisory Board.

