



The Early Childhood Education: P-3 and Leadership Financial Assistance Project

Introduction

The Montana Early Childhood Education: P-3 and Leadership Financial Assistance Project was created with funds made available through the Montana Preschool Development Grant. The goal of the project is to build early childhood teacher and leadership capacity statewide through financial assistance to individuals pursuing course work leading to the new Montana ECE: P—3 teacher endorsement or an early childhood master’s degree.

Financial assistance will be awarded through an application process on a priority basis as described below. Financial assistance will pay the full cost of tuition and fees plus a \$400 stipend for books each term. The cost of required background checks for students will also be included if necessary. These funds will be paid directly to the institution for each recipient. Books will need to be purchased before classes begin and students will be reimbursed the \$400.

The Project is a collaboration between the Office of Public Instruction, the Department of Public Health and Human Services Early Childhood Services Bureau, MSU’s Early Childhood Project, the Montana Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium, and Montana institutions of higher education that are regionally accredited.

Who is Eligible to Apply?

- Applicants must be CURRENT on the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry at the time of application and must remain current through the annual Registry renewal process throughout the duration of their involvement with this project. Visit www.mtecp.org or call 1.800.213.6310 for more information. Program Directors or Education Managers may also be able to provide assistance about how to open an account with the Early Childhood Project and apply online. There is a User Guide on the website that outlines each step of the Registry application process with screen shots to assist you.
- Applicants must be working a minimum of 15 hours/week in programs as described in priorities outlined below.
- Applicants must be pursuing course work that leads to the ECE: P-3 Endorsement or to a master’s degree in early childhood education at UM or MSU and meet eligibility criteria in one of the six priorities outlined below. It is understood that some students may not complete all of the course work necessary to achieve the P-3 endorsement or their master’s degree within the four year grant period.
- The Preschool Development Grant has identified the following targeted programs and communities as participants in the grant:

Cohort I	Great Falls Schools District Hardin School District CMHS Head Start, Lewistown Area RMDC Head Start, Helena Area HRDC Head Start, Bozeman Area
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Cohort II	Fort Peck Head Start Blackfeet Early Childhood Center Head Start
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Anaconda School District
Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Head Start
Crow Nation Head Start
Kootenai Valley Head Start, Libby and Troy
Libby School District

Cohort III Kalispell School District
Northwest Montana Head Start
Butte Head Start
Butte School District
Northern Cheyenne Head Start
Rocky Boy Head Start
Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes Early Childhood Center (Ronan area)
Fort Belknap Head Start

- Priorities for financial assistance awards shall be as follows:

First Priority

- Lead teachers in targeted programs
- Assistant teachers and aides in targeted programs

Second Priority

- Lead teacher, assistant teachers, and teacher aides who live in the targeted communities working in a state licensed/registered child care program, Head Start, Early Head Start, Public School Preschool, or Tribal Child Care program
- Special Education P -12 licensed preschool teachers in targeted community school districts

Third Priority

- Non-teachers (such as family engagement coordinators, program directors, education managers, curriculum coordinators, site supervisors, disability coordinators, specialists) working in the targeted programs pursuing an early childhood master's degree at UM (either track) or at MSU
- Non-teachers working in the targeted programs pursuing the ECE: P - 3
- Non-teachers working in other early childhood programs (as defined in Priority 2 above) in the targeted communities

Fourth Priority

- Teachers working in a state licensed/registered child care program, Head Start, Early Head Start, Public School Preschool, or Tribal Child Care in other communities.

Fifth Priority

- K – 3 teachers in targeted communities

Application Process

Teachers meeting the initial criteria (as stated above) must complete the application. All applications must be completed in full to be considered for admission into the ECE: P-3 Financial Assistance Project. The Review Committee consists of the Early Childhood Project Director and one other ECP staff member. A contact list for each school involved in the project is located on the ECP website by clicking on Incentives and Awards. The top of the page outlines general project information and current new and renewal applications. Contact information for each college or university is also found there. All applicants will receive a letter confirming their approval or denial (reason/s for denial will be stated.)

The application must be signed and mailed to the ECP by the deadline stated on the application. Faxed and emailed applications will not be accepted.

Renewal Process

If accepted into the project, the ECE Renewal Form will need to be submitted for continuing financial assistance. Current Practitioner Registry status will be re-verified by the ECP for each renewal.

Appeal Process

If an award is denied an Appeal Process is available. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the ECP director. The Appeal Committee includes the ECP Director, one other ECP Review Committee member, and the designated faculty leader for the early childhood education program at the college where the applicant is/had planned to enroll. This committee will conduct a complete review and will recommend action based upon the appeal materials and rationale submitted to the ECP Director.

Obligation of Participants

- Applicants must be current on The Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry to apply and receive financial assistance. The Registry requires annual renewal.
- Participants must register for classes in a timely manner to avoid late fees and secure the desired courses before they fill. Students who have justification for late fees on their initial enrollment may be reimbursed for those fees, but only on the first semester of coursework and only for good cause.
- Participants will be provided with continuous advising from their college or university to help them navigate successfully through the course of study necessary to achieve the ECE: P-3 endorsement or master's degree.
- Upon receipt of the P-3 endorsement or master's degree, participants will update their online Registry account under the Education tab and submit a copy of their teaching license to the ECP so their Registry Career Path Level can be updated and a new certificate issued.

Employment after Completion

Upon receipt of the ECE: P-3 Endorsement or an early childhood education Master's Degree, recipients are encouraged to work in an early childhood program serving children and families with high needs for a minimum of two years.

Termination from the Program

Any participant who begins an ECE: P-3 endorsement program with the Financial Assistance Project may be terminated for cause. Each institution will be responsible for this based upon their unique policies and procedures regarding academic expectations and student conduct. In addition, the Appeal Committee reserves the right to terminate students from the project for not adhering to the policies and procedures.

