



Montana Early Learning Standards Communications Toolkit

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Tips for Effective Communication

Strong communication with your key audiences will help to build awareness and understanding of the **Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS)** across all of those contributing to the education of children birth to 8 years old. Use the tips below to support effective promotion of MELS.

Communication Essentials

Be Clear and Concise

People serving young children are busy. Keep messages short, focused, and in plain language. Lead with the most important point.

Use a Consistent Voice

A friendly, warm, and reassuring tone works best. Stay aligned with MELS messaging—focus on early childhood development, supportive learning environments, and the importance of alignment across all systems serving children from birth to age 8.

Know Your Audience

- **Families:** Want quick, clear updates for how the standards can support their child's development.
- **Early education providers:** Need practical information for implementation in the classroom.
- **Early education students:** Want research and theory to help expand their foundational knowledge.
- **Community Partners:** Prefer shareable, professional content that is easy to distribute.

Keep Branding Consistent

Use MELS graphics, colors, and logos to build recognition. Families notice consistent branding across platforms.

Tips for Strong Social Media Posts

Keep It Short & Scannable

Use 1–3 short sentences or bullets. Attention spans on platforms like Facebook are short.

Add High-Quality Visuals

Photos of your environment, activities, certificates, or graphics increase engagement and help posts stand out.

Include a Clear Call to Action (CTA)

Examples:

- “Ask us what MELS means for your child.”
- “Read the MELS FAQs to learn more.”
- “Share your experiences with MELS in the classroom.”

Use Hashtags to Extend Reach

Try: #MontanaMELS, #EarlyLearningMT, #ChildCareMT

Post at Consistent Times

Consistency builds trust and visibility. Aim for 1–2 posts per week during high-engagement windows (mornings or early evenings).

Leverage Partnerships

Tag community partners, local organizations, or relevant agencies to amplify your message.

Tips for Emails, Flyers, and Other Communications

- **Start with the Key Message:** Put the purpose in the first one or two sentences.
- **Use Headers and Bullets:** Makes content easier to scan and reduces information overload.
- **Highlight Benefits to Families:** Focus on how MELS participation improves children's daily experiences.
- **Make Next Steps Simple:** Add links, QR codes, or brief instructions so families don't have to search for information.

Simple Monthly Communication Calendar

Here's an easy, repeatable structure you can plug into your regular workflow:

| Week | Theme | Examples of Content |
|---------------|-----------------------|---|
| Week 1 | MELS Awareness | Post about what MELS is, highlight key messages; send a short reminder about your application goals. |
| Week 2 | Program Highlights | Share a photo of a learning activity, staff training, or environment improvement tied to MELS. |
| Week 3 | Family Engagement | Share a tip for families, a link to resources, or invite questions about MELS. |
| Week 4 | Celebration or Update | Announce achievements (e.g., trainings, new classroom application), thank staff/students/families, or share a positive story. |

Add these monthly:

- **1 newsletter blurb** (MELS update)
- **1 partnership touchpoint** (tag/share/post with a partner)

Remember

Effective communication isn't about volume—it's about **clarity, consistency, and connection**. Small, steady updates across platforms will your audience learn more about MELS and the benefits of their application in early childhood settings.

MELS Frequently Asked Questions

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section provides clear, accessible answers to common questions about the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS). Its purpose is to support partners, educators, advocates, and other stakeholders in understanding, communicating, and implementing MELS across Montana's early childhood system.

How to Use This FAQ:

- **Find Quick Answers:** Use the FAQ to quickly locate key information about the MELS, including their purpose, structure, and how to use the standards in various settings.
- **Support Communication:** The FAQ offers talking points and explanations to share with families, colleagues, and community partners to build awareness and understanding of the updated standards.
- **Support Use of MELS:** Whether you are new to the MELS or looking for guidance on specific topics, the FAQ provides practical insights and links to additional resources to help you use the standards effectively.
- **Support Consistent Messaging:** Share this FAQ with your team or partners to help everyone confidently promote the MELS and answer frequent questions with shared language.

By using this FAQ, you can confidently address questions, promote the value of the MELS using shared language with other early childhood partners, and help ensure that all Montana children benefit from high-quality, developmentally appropriate early learning experiences.

What are the MELS?

The Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) provide a continuum of expectations for children's growth and learning from birth through age 8. Rather than serving as mandates, the MELS are a guide for learning and development wherever children are—at home, in childcare, informal learning spaces, public or private preschool, or in kindergarten and the early primary grades. The standards affirm that every child is a capable learner who deserves supportive environments that honor their identity, respect individual developmental pathways, and nurture emerging strengths. The MELS support intentional teaching, responsive caregiving, and alignment across Montana's early childhood system.

Specifically, the MELS seek to:

- Provide a common language for everyone who works with and cares for young children, birth through age 8.
- Guide intentional practice and professional learning for adults working with and on behalf of young children and their families, including caregivers, teachers, families, and community partners.
- Encourage practices that are developmentally appropriate, meaningful, and responsive to children's home languages.
- Create continuity by connecting learning expectations across home and child care settings, preschool, kindergarten, and the early primary grades.
- Strengthen professional learning and foster communication among educators, caregivers, families, and community partners.
- Keep play, relationships, and meaningful experiences at the center of children's growth and development.
- Include practices in the Learning Opportunity that support multilingual learners' home languages, offer inclusive options for children with disabilities, and weave [Indian Education for All \(IEFA\) Essential Understandings](#) into everyday learning experiences.

Where can I find the MELS?

The MELS are posted on the [Montana Department of Health and Human Services Quality Initiatives website](#). By accessing the MELS on the DPHHS website, you can ensure you're viewing the most current version and relevant support materials.

How do I use the MELS?

The MELS support families and early childhood educators with children's growth and learning from birth to age 8. The sections follow a logical order, beginning with basic concepts and advancing to practical uses. You have the option to read everything for thorough understanding or to skip directly to topics that are most relevant to you.

Quick Tips for Using the MELS

- Use the clickable table of contents to easily find the information you need.
- Start small: Focus on one domain or age band at a time.
- Use the “Learning Opportunities” for practical activity ideas.
- Keep the standards accessible for ongoing reference. Use it as a resource whenever you need guidance or confirmation.
- Collaborate with colleagues and peers to share strategies and successes.
- The standards are a living document—adapt them to fit your unique setting and children.

What's new in the 2025 MELS?

The 2025 revision of the Montana Early Learning Standards reflects the collective expertise, dedication, and vision of professionals across Montana's early childhood and early elementary systems. This update represents a significant step forward in supporting the learning and development of children from birth – age 8.

This updated version:

- adds standards for children ages 6-8 and provides Montana with a continuum that guides learning and development across birth - age 8, while recognizing that transitions are especially critical.
- organizes benchmarks and indicators by age and presents a developmental continuum, reflecting the continuous and individualized nature of children's growth.
- recognizes that development and grade levels often overlap. New age bands serve as a familiar point of entry within early care and education, helping align with educational systems while keeping child development—not grade level—as the primary focus.

How are the standards organized?

The standards support children's development from birth through age 8, with three overlapping age bands: infants and toddlers (birth–3), preschool (ages 3–5), and

kindergarten through grade 3 (ages 5–8). This intentional overlap helps ensure smooth transitions and recognizes that growth does not occur in discrete steps.

Standards are structured by Domains, Subdomains, and Benchmarks, each with Indicators and suggested Learning Opportunities. This layered approach helps educators and caregivers observe and support growth across core areas as well as key content areas like science, social studies, English language arts, creative arts, and health.

The MELS Standards Wheel visually represents these domains and illustrates how children's development unfolds across interconnected areas. At its center are foundational domains, surrounded by content areas and essential 21st-century skills, emphasizing the whole-child approach and lifelong learning.

[Insert wheel graphic]

Who can help me with the MELS?

Questions about the MELS can be directed to Deanna Myland of the DPHHS Early Childhood and Family Support Division deanna.myland@mt.gov.

Acknowledgements

This work was guided by Deanna Mydland of DPHHS and informed by Office of Child Care federal technical assistance partners. Funding and support were provided by the Montana DPHHS Early Childhood and Family Support Division, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and Bright Futures B–5.

Messages for Key Audiences

This section provides ready-to-use key messages, sample emails, and social media posts for parents and families, early childhood educators, higher education students, and advocates. Use these tailored messages and outreach strategies to engage the diverse audiences who play a role in supporting the MELS.

Quick Tips for MELS Outreach

- **Use official graphics:** Add the MELS logo, Standards Wheel, or colorful icons to make your message stand out.
- **Keep it short and clear:** Share one main idea per message or post, using simple language and short paragraphs or bullet points.
- **Add hashtags and links:** Include links to the MELS website or resources. For social media, use #MontanaMELS.
- **Keep people engaged:** Regularly share tips, stories, updates, and visuals to keep your audience interested beyond the initial rollout.
- **Be accessible:** Use alt text for images, readable fonts, and high-contrast graphics.
- **Personalize when possible:** Address recipients by name and tailor content to their role (educator, family, etc.).
- **Include a call to action:** Invite your audience to download, share, attend, or respond.
- **Respond and interact:** Like, reply, or follow up on comments and questions to build community.
- **Sign off with contact info:** Let people know how to reach you for questions or support.

By leveraging the audience-specific messaging in this section, you can effectively communicate the importance of the MELS and inspire others to support high-quality early learning throughout Montana.

Messaging to Parents and Families

These are key messages and calls to action to promote the MELS with families and primary caregivers of children birth to age 8. Reference the sample emails and social media posts to see how these key messages can support the development of outreach materials.

Key messages for this audience include:

- The MELS supports your child's growth in all areas (emotional, social, physical, communication, and cognitive) ensuring a well-rounded approach to development from birth through age 8.
- The MELS offers clear guidance on developmental milestones and learning expectations, empowering you to support your child's progress and communicate effectively with teachers and caregivers.
- Through the MELS, you can partner with educators to create smooth transitions between home, childcare, and school environments, building a solid foundation for future achievement.
- The MELS connects learning across content areas like science, social studies, English language arts, creative arts, and health, giving your child rich, integrated experiences that nurture curiosity and skills.
- The MELS prepares your child for lifelong learning and success, helping them gain confidence, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative innovation abilities.

Calls to action:

🏠 Ready to support your child's learning journey? Explore the [Montana Early Learning Standards](#) and start using them at home!

🏫 Empower your child's future – Ask your child's educators how they plan to use the [Montana Early Learning Standards](#) in the classroom!

Sample Email to Parents and Families

Subject: Exciting News: Updates to the Montana Early Learning Standards

Dear Parents and Families,

We are thrilled to announce important updates to the [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#), designed to support your child's development and create a solid foundation for future success. The MELS provides clear guidance on developmental milestones and learning expectations, empowering you to help your child grow and thrive at every stage.

With the MELS, you can work closely with your child and your child's educators to ensure smooth transitions between home, childcare, and school environments. The standards connect learning across key content areas, including science, social studies, English language arts, creative arts, and health, giving your child rich, integrated experiences that nurture curiosity and a lifelong love of learning.

The MELS also helps prepare your child for lifelong success by building essential skills like confidence, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. We encourage you to explore the MELS resources and connect with other parents to share experiences and ideas.

Ready to support your child's learning journey? Explore the [MELS resources](#) today and consider talking with your child's early childhood educators about how they plan to use the MELS in the classroom. Your voice is vital in empowering your child's future!

We look forward to continuing to support the best possible start for every child.

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Role]

[Your Organization or Program Name]

Sample Social Media Posts for Parents and Families

Post #1

Montana families, we have exciting news! The updated [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) are now available to support your child's early education journey. Discover how these standards help prepare every child for success. #MELS #MontanaFamilies #EarlyLearning

Post #2

The [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) just got an update! Ask your child's educators how they plan to use the new MELS to nurture curiosity, confidence, and creativity in the classroom.

Post #3

Montana families: The updated [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) are here! Chat with your child's educators about how they'll use the MELS in the classroom, share your ideas, and work together for your child's success at home and school. Your voice matters! #MELS #MontanaFamilies #ParentVoice

Messaging to Early Childhood Educators

These are key messages and calls to action to promote the MELS with educators in child care programs, public schools, and early literacy programs. Reference the sample emails and social media posts to see how these key messages can support the development of outreach materials.


Key messages for this audience include:


- The MELS are your roadmap for supporting children's growth from birth to 8 years old.
- The MELS align with kindergarten readiness expectations and integrated with other quality systems like QRIS and Head Start. This alignment ensures smooth transitions for children and helps child care providers meet state and federal requirements.
- The MELS serve as a planning tool for curriculum and activities, guiding providers to create learning environments. They outline domains, benchmarks, and real-life examples for easy use in classrooms and home care.
- Providers who use the MELS can communicate clearly with families about developmental goals and progress, fostering stronger partnerships and confidence in the quality of care.
- Montana's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) incorporates the MELS, so providers who use the standards are more likely to earn better quality ratings and fulfill licensing standards.

Calls to Action:

Take the Next Step Today!

 Download the standards: Access the [latest version of the MELS and resources here](#).

 Integrate into Your Curriculum: Use the MELS to guide lesson planning and assessment.

 Join the Movement: Share your commitment to quality care—post on social media using #MontanaMELS and inspire others!

Sample Email to Early Childhood Educators

Subject: Exciting News: Updates to the Montana Early Learning Standards

Dear Early Childhood Educators,

We are thrilled to announce the release of the updated Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS)! The revised edition incorporates the newest findings in early childhood development as well as valuable insights from educators statewide.

Key highlights of the updated MELS include:

- Alignment with current research to support children's growth, development, and school readiness from birth to age five.
- Clearer guidance for setting meaningful learning goals, adapting classroom environments, and engaging families in their children's learning journey.
- Expanded resources, including sample activities, observation tools, and strategies for inclusive practices to meet the needs of all learners.
- Stronger connections between early learning and future school success, making the standards a valuable resource for educators, families, and communities alike.

We encourage you to visit the official [Montana Quality Initiatives website](#) to access the latest standards and explore how the MELS can help guide your teaching and family partnerships.

Thank you for your dedication to early learning!

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Role]

[Your Organization or Program Name]

Sample Social Media Posts for Early Childhood Educators

Post #1

Exciting news for early childhood educators in Montana! The new [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) are here! Explore the updated standards and see how they can benefit your classroom. #MontanaMELS

Post #2

Calling all Montana early childhood providers! Have you seen a positive impact from using the [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) in your classroom or program? We want to hear your success stories! Share how the MELS has helped your children, families, or teaching practices, and inspire others in our community. Use #MELSuccess and tag us to celebrate your achievements together!

Messaging to Early Childhood Higher Education Students and Leaders

These are key messages and calls to action to promote the MELS with students enrolled in higher education programs and the educators who serve them. Reference the sample emails and social media posts to see how these key messages can support the development of outreach materials.


Key messages for this audience include:


- The MELS helps future teachers connect what they learn in class to real-world teaching. It gives them a clear guide for child development, lesson planning, and family engagement, so they're ready to lead and improve early childhood education.
- The MELS provide a research-based framework for child development from birth through age 8, helping students understand developmental milestones and learning domains. This equips future educators with the knowledge to design developmentally appropriate practices.
- Higher education programs can use the MELS as a planning tool for lesson development, assessment strategies, and classroom environments, giving students hands-on experience in applying standards to real-world scenarios.
- Using the MELS in higher education bridges child development theory with classroom practice, enabling students to understand how standards inform curriculum, assessment, and family engagement strategies.
- Knowledge of the MELS positions graduates to become advocates and leaders in early childhood education, influencing policy, program quality, and professional development initiatives.

Call to Action:

Take the Next Step Today!

 Download the standards: [Access the latest version of the MELS here.](#)

 Integrate into Your Curriculum: Use the MELS to guide lesson planning and assessment.

 Join the Movement: Share your commitment to quality care. Post on social media using #MontanaMELS and inspire others!

Sample Email to Early Childhood Higher Education Leaders

Subject: Elevate Early Childhood Education: Integrate the MELS into Your Program

Dear Early Childhood Higher Education Leaders,

I am writing to encourage your program's engagement with the [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) as a cornerstone for excellence in early childhood education. The MELS offers a shared, research-based framework connecting developmental expectations from birth through age 8, seamlessly aligning curriculum, assessment, and family engagement across diverse settings such as child care, preschool, Head Start, and public schools.

By integrating the MELS into your curriculum planning and assessment strategies, your faculty and students gain hands-on experience applying standards to real-world scenarios. This not only strengthens the connection between theory and classroom practice, but also prepares graduates to become advocates and leaders who influence policy, program quality, and professional development initiatives.

The MELS supports alignment with licensing, QRIS, and P–3 standards, ensuring teacher preparation pipelines and programs work toward consistent outcomes and quality indicators. Utilizing the MELS language in policy recommendations and program briefs maintains continuity in early childhood education expectations from the classroom to state policy.

I invite you to download the [latest MELS version](#), integrate the standards into your curriculum, and champion quality care by sharing your commitment with colleagues and on social media using #MontanaMELS. Together, we can make the MELS the centerpiece of Montana's early childhood mixed-delivery system and ensure every child receives a strong start.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to advancing early childhood education.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title/Organization]

Sample Social Media Posts for Early Childhood Higher Education Students

Are you studying to become an early childhood educator in Montana's Big Sky State? Explore the [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) and discover how they connect theory to practice in real-world settings. By engaging with the MELS, you'll help shape quality education for children across our statewide university system. Share your commitment with #MontanaMELS and join the movement for a brighter future!

Are you passionate about early childhood education? Explore how the [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) align seamlessly with the P-3 Framework, connecting developmental expectations from birth through age 8. By engaging with the MELS, you'll be prepared to support continuity in learning and high-quality outcomes for young children across all settings. Share your commitment and join the movement with #MontanaMELS!


Messaging to Early Childhood Champions


These are key messages and calls to action to promote the MELS with people who promote and fund early childhood development in the state. Reference the sample emails and social media posts to see how these key messages can support the development of outreach materials.


Key messages for this audience include:

- The MELS is a shared framework that connects birth through age 8 developmental expectations, curriculum, assessment, and family engagement across settings (child care, preschool, Head Start, and public schools). This positions the MELS as the “common language” for Montana’s mixed-delivery system.
- The MELS supports alignment with licensing, QRIS, and P–3 standards, so programs and teacher preparation pipelines are working toward the same outcomes and quality indicators.
- Using the MELS language in early education briefs and policy recommendations and can keep early childhood education expectations consistent from classroom to policy text.
- Encouraging programs to use the MELS for goal-setting, data collection, and self-study can help link standards to observable child outcomes and program practices.

Calls to Action:

 [Download the standards](#), share them widely, and make the MELS the centerpiece of your promotional efforts. Together, we can ensure every Montana child gets the best start!

 Promote the MELS in higher education today—because preparing educators means preparing Montana’s children for success.

 Use vignettes and classroom snapshots to show how children progress across the MELS domains; invite educators and families to share examples that bring the standards to life.

Sample Email to Early Childhood Champions

Subject: Updates to the Montana Early Learning Standards

Dear [Champion/Partner],

I am excited to share important updates to the [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) that directly support our shared mission of ensuring the best possible outcomes for young children across our state. The new MELS reflect the latest research in early childhood development and emphasize access, family engagement, and high-quality learning experiences for all children.

Your work as an early childhood champion plays a crucial part in strengthening the influence of these standards. Key highlights of the new MELS include:

- **Focus on Equity:** The revised standards prioritize closing opportunity gaps and ensure all children, regardless of background, can thrive.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** The MELS actively encourages partnership between families, educators, and community organizations, recognizing the importance of a unified effort in early learning success.
- **Real-World Application:** The standards are meant to be practical and adaptable, empowering advocates like you to support local implementation and highlight stories of positive change.

We invite you to visit the [Montana Quality Initiatives website](#) to learn more and to actively share these updates within your networks and promote adoption of the new MELS in your communities. Your leadership and voice are essential to ensuring that every child in Montana benefits from these advancements. Please reach out if you have questions, need resources, or wish to collaborate on initiatives that support early learning.

We deeply appreciate your ongoing dedication to serving young children in Montana. Together, we can ensure our youngest learners have the solid foundation they deserve.

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Role]

[Your Organization or Program Name]

Sample Social Media Posts for Early Childhood Champions

Post #1

Exciting News for Montana Early Childhood! The revised Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) are here, prioritizing equity, collaboration, and real-world application for all young learners. Explore the updates, share within your networks, and help ensure every Montana child has the opportunity to thrive. Visit the [Montana Quality Initiatives website](#) to learn more and join us in strengthening early learning across our state!

#MELS #EarlyLearning #MontanaKids

Post #2

Your voice matters! Help ensure Montana's children benefit from the updated [Montana Early Learning Standards \(MELS\)](#) by encouraging educators to use them in every classroom. Share how the MELS empower teachers to provide equitable, practical, and engaging learning experiences for all kids. Let's work together to build strong foundations—spread the word and support the implementation of MELS today!

#MontanaMELS

Posting MELS Web Content

To help build awareness and consistent understanding of the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS), we encourage all partners to share information about MELS on their websites. Below are key steps and sample content you can use to ensure your audience can access the most up-to-date resources and guidance.

- **Use common language:** Use language from the audience-specific FAQs in this document to provide a brief description of the MELS on your website that aligns with language shared across early learning partners.
- **Take a centralized approach:** Direct users to the official state website for the MELS to help ensure everyone accesses the latest and most reliable standards. This approach maintains consistency, prevents outdated information, and supports effective use of the Montana Early Learning Standards statewide.
- **Invite engagement:** Encourage visitors to visit the standards and the FAQ. Encourage your audience to share experiences or examples illustrating the MELS in action.
- **Measure your success:** Set a reminder to review web analytics on your MELS page to see how often visitors to your site interact with elements on the page. When interactions drop, it might be time for renewed promotional efforts such as social media posts or emails.

By leveraging the web content guidance and examples in this section, you can effectively promote MELS online, reach a wider audience, and support the implementation of high-quality early learning standards throughout Montana.

Sample Web Content for Partner Sites

Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS): Building a Strong Foundation for Every Child



The Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) serve as a unified framework for early childhood education across our state, connecting developmental expectations from birth through age 8. The MELS helps ensure all children—no matter the setting—receive high quality, consistent support and learning opportunities.

Access the Standards and Resources:

Visit the [Montana Quality Initiatives website](#) to download the latest standards, find supporting materials, and learn how the MELS connects early learning across Montana.

Make the MELS the center of your early learning efforts! Explore how the standards can guide goal setting, classroom practices, and family engagement to help all Montana children succeed.

We encourage educators, families, and community members to familiarize themselves with the MELS and share their stories about the difference these standards are making. For more information and the latest updates, always refer to the [DPHHS Quality Initiatives website](#).

Printing the MELS

While the MELS are available for free online in a digital format, some users may prefer a printed copy for classroom or program use. The suggestions below are intended to support thoughtful, efficient printing of the MELS, either in full or by selected sections.

Select Only the Content You Need

- Use the Table of Contents to identify the pages most relevant to your work.
- Print a specific page range rather than the entire document.
- If creating separate resources, consider including the introductory pages with each age band to provide shared context.

Prepare Files for Printing

- Save selected pages as a PDF to preserve formatting, graphics, and page numbers.
- Use landscape orientation and standard paper sizes unless otherwise needed.
- If color printing is not feasible, print in grayscale.

Professional Printing and Binding

- Provide one final PDF with pages in the correct order.
- Clearly label the file with the age band and date.
- Request double-sided printing when appropriate.
- For binding, consider spiral or comb binding and divider tabs for quick reference
- Request a proof copy before printing to check margins, alignment, and color.

Keep Digital Access Available

Even when using printed copies, users are encouraged to:

- Keep the digital version bookmarked for quick searching and updates.
- Use printed copies as working tools, knowing the digital version remains the most current source.

Graphics

Consistent use of the MELS graphics and branding is essential for building recognition and trust across all outreach efforts. The official MELS visuals such as the logo, Standards Wheel, and color palette help unify communications and reinforce the value of high-quality early learning throughout Montana.

Recommendations for Print Outreach:

- Always use high-resolution versions of the MELS logo and graphics to ensure clarity and professionalism in flyers, posters, handouts, and mailers.
- Incorporate the official MELS color palette for headings, borders, and accents to maintain a cohesive look.
- Place the MELS logo prominently, such as at the top of the page or near the title and avoid stretching or altering the proportions of the graphics.
- When possible, include the Standards Wheel or other official visuals to illustrate the comprehensive nature of the MELS.

Recommendations for Digital Outreach:

- Use web-optimized versions of the MELS graphics for emails, social media posts, newsletters, and websites to ensure fast loading and clear display.
- Include alternative text (alt text) for all images to support accessibility for all users.
- Link the MELS logo or graphics to the official MELS website or resource page to direct audiences to more information.
- Maintain consistent branding across all digital platforms by using the same color scheme, fonts, and graphic placement as in print materials.

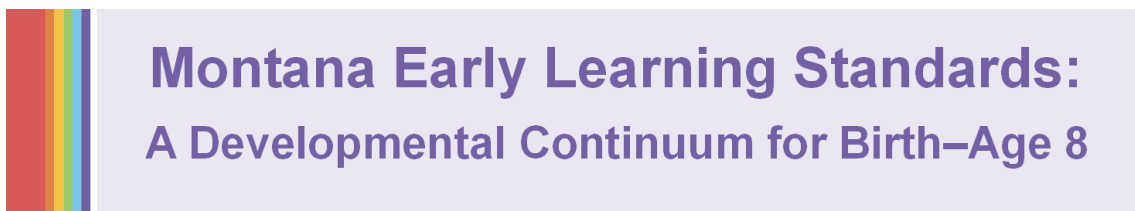
By following these guidelines, you help ensure that every communication about the MELS is visually consistent, accessible, and instantly recognizable, strengthening the impact of your outreach and supporting Montana's commitment to quality early learning.

MELS graphics

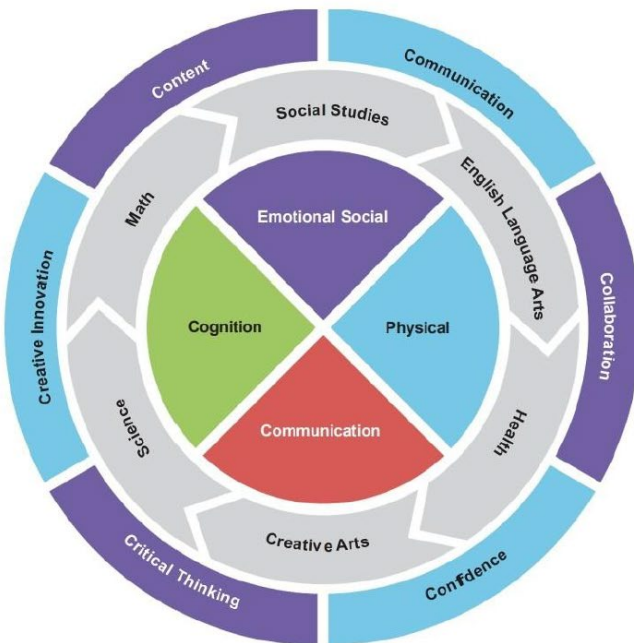
Logo



Banner








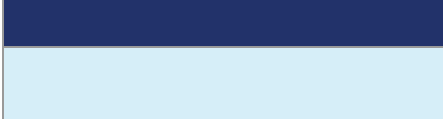




Standards Wheel



The MELS color palette

The following colors are used in the MELS primary resource. Use similar colors when creating MELS outreach materials for consistency and brand recognition.

| Color | Code | Use |
|---|--|--|
|  | Hex: #eb4f51 RGB: (235,79,81) CMYK: (0,66,66,8) | Accent color, Communication Core Domain color |
|  | Hex: #ef7e32 RGB: (239,126,50) CMYK: (0,47,79,6) | Accent color |
|  | Hex: #fec010 RGB: (254,192,16) CMYK: (0,24,94,0) | Accent color |
|  | Hex: #93c953 RGB: (147,201,83) CMYK: (27,0,59,21) | Accent color, Cognition Core Domain color |
|  | Hex: #50c8ea RGB: (80,200,234) CMYK: (66,15,0,8) | Accent color, Physical Core Domain color |
|  | Hex: #765fa9 RGB: (118,95,169) CMYK: (30,44,0,34) | Accent color, title and section headers, Emotional and Social Core Domain color |
|  | Hex: #22326a RGB: (34,50,106) CMYK: (68,53,0,58) | Accent color |
|  | Hex: #d6eef8 RGB: (214,238,248) CMYK: (14,4,0,3) | Background color for vignettes |
|  | Hex: #9e8bbe RGB: (158,139,190) CMYK: (17,27,0,25) | Background color for table headers. Theme color for community |
|  | Hex: #ecef4 RGB: (236,234,244) CMYK: (3,4,0,4) | Background color for tables and callout boxes |

Print or Digital Flyer

The digital flyer mockup on the following page is a ready-to-edit template for the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) outreach. Use these tips to build your own

- **Copy the Template:** Copy and paste the content to your preferred editing software.
- **Personalize:** Update information for your audience and add local details like organization, contacts, dates, or calls to action. Include key messages as needed.
- **Brand Your Flyer:** Keep MELS graphics and colors. Add your own logos and photos.
- **Design:** Adjust layout and format for print or digital use. Spell out links for printed versions and save as PDF.
- **Final Steps:** Proofread carefully and share with your audience via email, social media, website, or printed copies.

By adapting and sharing print and digital flyers, you help ensure that messaging about the Montana Early Learning Standards is clear, consistent, and engaging for your community.



Montana Early Learning Standards: A Developmental Continuum for Birth–Age 8

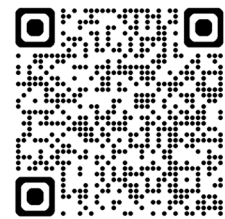
The recently updated Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) provide a comprehensive, research-based framework for supporting children's growth and learning from birth through age 8. MELS are not mandates, but a guide for educators, caregivers, and families to create supportive, developmentally appropriate environments in homes, child care, preschool, and early elementary settings.

Key Highlights

- **Birth–Age 8 Continuum:** The MELS now span from birth through age 8, supporting smooth transitions and alignment across early learning settings.
- **Domains of Development:** Organized into four core domains; Emotional Social, Physical, Communication, and Cognition, each with subdomains, benchmarks, indicators, and practical learning opportunities.
- **Developmentally Appropriate Practice:** The MELS affirm that every child is a capable learner, deserving of environments that honor identity, respect individual pathways, and nurture strengths.
- **Inclusive & Culturally Responsive:** Standards embed support for multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and integrate Indian Education for All (IEFA) Essential Understandings.
- **Practical Guidance:** Each age band (Infant/Toddler, Preschool, K–8) includes real-world examples, learning opportunities, and transition tips for educators and families.

LEARN MORE

View the standards and access resources on the MT DPHHS Quality Initiatives site



For questions or support, contact Deanna Mydland deanna.mydland@mt.gov



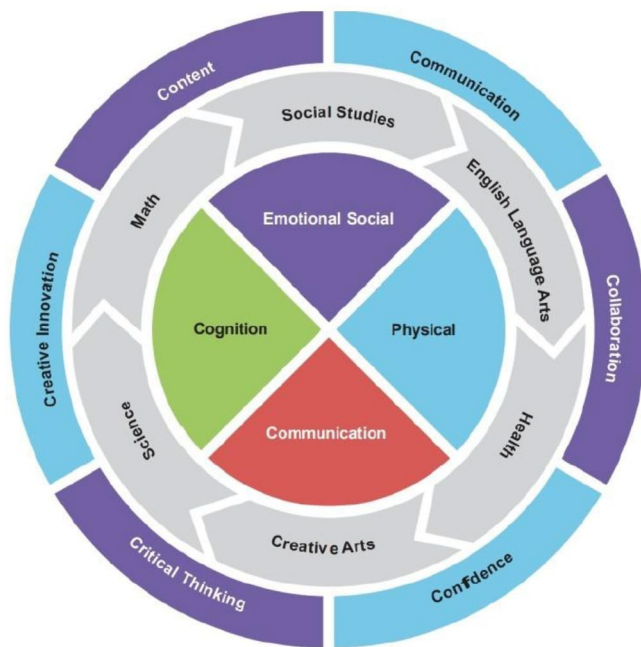
Introduction
Montana Early Learning Standards

Use this FAQ to get oriented to the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS) and start using them right away.

What are the MELS?

The MELS support families and early childhood educators in guiding children’s growth and learning from birth through age 8.

MELS Learning Standards Wheel



What’s new in the 2025 MELS?

Updates add standards for ages 6-8, organize benchmarks/indicators by age in a developmental continuum, and recognize that development and grade levels often overlap.

How are the standards organized?

They’re grouped by domains, subdomains, and benchmarks with indicators and suggested learning opportunities. Age bands overlap (birth–3, 3–5, 5–8) to support smooth transitions.

How do I get started without feeling overwhelmed?

Use the clickable table of contents, then start small—focus on one domain or one age band at a time and build from there.

Where do I find practical activity ideas?

Look for the **Learning Opportunities** within each section for ready-to-use ideas you can adapt to your setting and the children you serve.

For questions or support, contact Deanna Mydland deanna.mydland@mt.gov



Questions

If you have feedback or questions about the content of this toolkit or how to use it, contact Deanna Mydland at Deanna.Mydland@mt.gov

Acknowledgements

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[mention any partners that provide feedback]

We gratefully acknowledge the expertise, guidance, and support provided by these organizations in advancing high-quality early learning and child care across Montana. Their commitment to building strong systems and supporting early childhood professionals has been instrumental in the creation of this toolkit.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

