2026 NATIONAL REPORT CARD

Montana

CLASS OF 2026 GRADE

B

PROJECTED CLASS OF 2031 GRADE

B

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Is a high school course with personal finance concepts required to be taken as a graduation requirement?

Yes, beginning with the Class of 2026, Montana requires high school students to take a half-year course in either personal finance or economics as well as a full-year career and technical education course to graduate.

Sources:

- ARM 10.55.905 Graduation Requirements

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION STANDARDS

In 2023, HB 535 became law in Montana. It added the following language to an existing statute (the underlined words were added to the existing law): *"Legislative goals for public elementary and secondary schools. It is the goal of the legislature that Montana's public elementary and secondary school system, in cooperation with parents or guardians, create a learning environment for each student that: ...(9) supports instruction of financial literacy, where students obtain the knowledge and skills required to succeed financially."* In response to this law the graduation requirements in Montana were expanded to include financial literacy. The new graduation requirements state that students must take a *"1/2 unit of economics or financial literacy within the 2 units of social studies, the 2 units of mathematics, or the 1 unit of career and technical education"* (emphasis added). This requirement goes into effect for the graduates of the Class of 2026 graduates. Montana content standards indicate what all students should know when they graduate. Montana has some financial literacy content in social studies, mathematics and in career and technical education standards. The new graduation requirement allows students to graduate by taking a half-year economics course with very little personal finance content. The state's high school economics standards consist of nine strands; only one strand is personal finance in nature and it only requires that students will *"explain how economic cycles affect personal financial decisions"*. This suggests that by taking the economic course, student would have about 6.5 hours of personal finance in a half-year economics course. Montana requires students to take one year of career and technical education. The career and technical education standards consist of 12 content standards. One of these skills (or 8% of the standards) includes instruction on preparing for postsecondary education and career paths, or about 10 hours of personal finance instruction in a full year course. The Montana math content standards were revised to help educators to bring financial content to students in their math course noting that many concepts related to financial literacy that exist within these math content standards. The Office of Public Instruction has also included a list of courses where financial literacy and/or economics content exists. These courses can be used to meet the new graduation requirement. *NGPF's 2026 State of Financial Education Report* indicates that only 17% of students live in districts that have a locally mandated standalone personal finance course requirement and 57.1% of student live in a district that offers a personal finance elective course. Based on this data, more than a quarter of students attend school districts that do not even offer a standalone personal finance course as an elective offering.

Sources:

- HB 535 (2023)
- ARM 10.55.905 Graduation Requirements
- School Administrators of Montana Topic Brief (September 2023)

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2026 NATIONAL REPORT CARD

Montana

CLASS OF 2026 GRADE	PROJECTED CLASS OF 2031 GRADE
B	B

- Financial Literacy and Economics Graduation Requirement Fact Sheet
- Social Studies
- Content Standards for Social Studies For K-12 (2021)
- Career & Technical Education Standards
- Career and Technical Education Curriculum Guide 2021
- Mathematics Standards
- Financial Literacy Across the K-12 Mathematics Standards (2026)
- Career, Technical, and Adult Education (CTAE)
- Economics-Financial Literacy Multidisciplinary Content Standards - Grades 9-12
- Financial Literacy and Economics Courses
- NGPF's 2026 State of Financial Education Report

PROJECTED GRADE FOR CLASS OF 2031

No policy change is pending that would change Montana's grade.

PRE-K TO GRADE EIGHT EDUCATION STANDARDS

The K to eight social studies and career and technical education standards include modest levels of personal finance concepts.

EXTRA CREDIT

The Montana Office of Public Instruction has a financial literacy education resources list on the Career, Technical, and Adult Education (CTAE) website.

Sources:

- Career, Technical, and Adult Education (CTAE)
- Financial Literacy Curricular Resources

CAVEAT

It is not clear how Montana measures student achievement in financial literacy or how the state monitors local school district implementation of these new requirements to ensure that every student is given equitable access to personal finance content prior to graduating high school.