



FCCLA Career **CONNECTIONS**

2026 STATE LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE

ALL NEW PARTICIPATION OPTION FOR 2026!

Are you ready to take your FCS career skills to the next level? Attendees will explore best practices in FCS related industries as well as foundational career preparation skills. Sessions will culminate with participants showing off what they have learned with content-specific challenges. Keep reading to learn more!

TRAINING TRACKS AVAILABLE



Career Readiness

CONNECTIONS

Ultimate Interview Challenge
Spontaneous Speaking Challenge



Culinary Arts

CONNECTIONS

Blade and Board Challenge
Plating Challenge



Early Childhood

CONNECTIONS

Ultimate Toy Design Challenge
Situational Solutions Challenge

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

State Leadership Conference attendees in grades 7-12 with an interest in expanding FCS-related skills

REGISTRATION DETAILS

Attendees must be registered by their chapter for the 2026 Montana FCCLA State Leadership Conference

Each chapter may register up to two attendees for each track; space is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Substitutions are permitted until the start of the conference.

Only registered attendees will be permitted; no spectators are permitted for any training or challenge events. No photos or recordings will be permitted. Attendees are not permitted to discuss the challenges or preparation until after all challenges are completed.



Career Readiness CONNECTIONS

2026 STATE LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE

ALL NEW PARTICIPATION OPTION FOR 2026!

Are you ready to take your interviewing and public speaking skills to the next level? Attendees will explore harnessing the power of artificial intelligence to create a resume, and prepare for interviews, as well as expand their impromptu public speaking skills. Participants will then show off what they have learned with the **Montana FCCLA Ultimate Interview Challenge** and the **Spontaneous Speaking Challenge**!

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

State Leadership Conference attendees in **grades 7-12** with an interest in preparing for successful job interviews and impromptu speaking skills. Attendance is limited to 20 participants total.

SESSION FORMAT

11:00-12:00	Welcome and Overview Utilizing technological resources to create a professional resume and prepare for interview questions Creating your spontaneous speech; communication skills and public speaking strategies that will help you communicate with confidence
12:00-12:45	Lunch
12:45-1:00	Panel Discussion: Acing the Interview
1:00-2:45	Montana FCCLA Ultimate Interview Challenge: Attendees will share their completed resume and participate in a mini-interview demonstrating skills learned in the training Montana FCCLA Spontaneous Speaking Challenge: Attendees will prepare and deliver a 4 minute speech about an assigned topic
2:45-3:00	Attendees reflect and complete session surveys

ELIGIBILITY

- Participation is open to all attendees registered for and attending the full Career Readiness Connection Training. Challenges will occur at three levels; Level 1 (grade 8 and below), Level 2 (grades 9-10) and Level 3 (grades 11-12).
- Attendees not in attendance for the full session are ineligible to participate. Participants must meet all requirements for the State Leadership Conference and agree to adhere to all policies of the conference.

Ultimate Interview CHALLENGE

PREPARATION

- **Before March 1**, participants will complete the Montana FCCLA Ultimate Interview form found at this link to select the position for which they will interview.
- Participants are required to bring a tablet, laptop, or Chromebook and must have access to a Google Drive account as well as accurate login information. Presenters are unable to provide technology assistance.
- Participants are encouraged to review the Montana FCCLA Ultimate Interview Challenge specifications prior to the event.

PROCEDURES

- Participants will create a resume and interview for an entry-level position related to Family and Consumer Sciences. The participant's current qualifications, experiences, and skills must align with the requirements for the position.
- Each participant will be scheduled an interview time. Participants must report to the interview 15 minutes prior to the participation time and upload the prepared resume to the challenge Google Drive folder.
- At the scheduled interview time, participants will complete a five-minute job interview for the position indicated on the previously submitted Google form.
- During the interview, participants will be asked general interview questions, as well as questions specific to the position they are applying for, skills, experiences, and education identified on the resume.
- Participants will complete the resume during the instructional component of the Career Connection training track. Previously prepared materials may not be accessed or utilized during this challenge.
- Participants may not utilize any support materials during the interview portion of the event.
- Once all participants have completed their interviews, the session will reconvene and receive feedback from the panel of evaluators, including strengths of the interviews, as well as areas for growth.
- The participant receiving the highest score in each level will be recognized in a presentation at the recognition session at the Montana FCCLA State Leadership Conference.
- The decision of the evaluators is final.
- Participants arriving late to their scheduled interview time will not be permitted to participate.
- Advisers will receive event feedback electronically within one week of the closing of the State Leadership Conference.
- Scoring criteria for the challenge includes:
 - Resume content, neatness, spelling and punctuation, work experience, and summary
 - Attitude and enthusiasm during the interview
 - Responses to interview questions

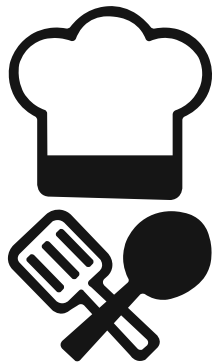
Spontaneous Speaking CHALLENGE

PREPARATION

- Participants are required to bring a writing instrument.
- Participants are encouraged to review the Montana FCCLA Spontaneous Speaking Challenge criteria prior to the event.

PROCEDURES

- Each participant will be scheduled a preparation time. Participants must report 15 minutes prior to the participation time and review the three topic choices. Participants will select one topic and have 10 minutes to prepare a speech of up to four minutes on the selected topic.
- Participants will be provided one index card to use during preparation time.
- At the conclusion of the preparation time, participants will present a four-minute spontaneous speech on the selected topic. The index card provided may be used by the participant during the speech. A timer will provide a one-minute warning. Participants will be stopped at four minutes.
- Participants may not utilize any support materials during any portion of the event.
- Once all participants have completed their presentations, the session will reconvene and receive feedback from the evaluators, including strengths, as well as areas for growth.
- The participant receiving the highest score for the challenge in each level will be recognized in a presentation at the recognition session at the Montana FCCLA State Leadership Conference.
- The decision of the evaluators is final.
- Participants arriving late to their scheduled preparation time will not be permitted to participate.
- Advisers will receive event feedback electronically within one week of the closing of the State Leadership Conference.
- Scoring criteria for the challenge includes:
 - Introduction
 - Relationship to Family and Consumer Sciences
 - Relationship to FCCLA purposes, programs and activities
 - Organization and cohesiveness
 - Topic Development
 - Summary/Closure
 - Delivery (eye contact, enthusiasm, etc.)
 - Grammar/Word usage



Culinary Arts CONNECTIONS

2026 STATE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

ALL NEW PARTICIPATION OPTION FOR 2026!

Are you ready to take your culinary arts skills to the next level? Attendees will explore best practices in the culinary arts industry as well as expand their plating and knife skills. Participants will then show off what they have learned with the **Montana FCCLA Plating Challenge** and the **Montana FCCLA Blade and Board Challenge**!

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

State Leadership Conference attendees in **grades 9-12** with an interest in preparing exploring and improving their culinary arts skills.

SESSION FORMAT

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|-------------|--|--|
| 11:00-12:00 | Welcome and Overview
Culinary Arts Skill Stations: Attendees will rotate through the stations listed to increase their culinary arts skills and knowledge:
Safety and Sanitation in the Culinary Industry
Intermediate Knife Handling
Principles of Plating | Beginner Knife Handling
Advanced Knife Handling |
| 12:00-12:45 | Lunch | |
| 12:45-1:00 | Panel Discussion: Culinary Arts Career Opportunities & Success | |
| 1:00-2:45 | Montana FCCLA Plating Challenge: Attendees will compete while creating an appealing plating display using common ingredients
Montana FCCLA Blade and Board Challenge: Attendees will demonstrate safe and sanitary food handling as they execute a series of specified knife skills | |
| 2:45-3:00 | Attendees reflect and complete session surveys | |

ELIGIBILITY

- Participation is open to all attendees registered for and attending the full Culinary Arts Connection Training. Challenges will occur at two levels; Level 2 (grades 9-10) and Level 3 (grades 11-12).
- Attendees not in attendance for the full session are ineligible to participate. Participants must meet all requirements for the State Leadership Conference and agree to adhere to all policies of the conference.
- Each participant is required to bring one cutting board, size and material of their choice, to the training.

Plating **CHALLENGE**



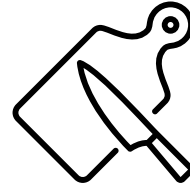
PREPARATION

- Participants are encouraged to review the Montana FCCLA Plating Challenge criteria prior to the event.

PROCEDURES

- The Plating Challenge allows students to showcase their creativity, technical culinary skills, and ability to present food in a visually appealing, professional manner.
- Supplies Provided to each participant include: plate, assigned food item(s) to be plated, paper towels, one spoon, one butter knife, and shared access to community plating resources, which may include but are not limited to: fresh herbs and spices, sauces and syrups, toothpicks/skewers, vegetable peeler, assorted fruits, paring knife, cutting board.
- The following challenge format will be used:
 - Review Time (5 minutes): The participants will have up to five minutes to examine the provided food, plate, and available community resources. No food handling or cutting is permitted during this time.
 - Plating Time (10 minutes): Participants design and complete their plating/garnish presentation. Participants will receive reminders at 9 minutes, and 9 minutes 30 seconds. Participants will be stopped at 10 minutes.
 - Judging & Cleanup (5 minutes): While judges evaluate the completed plate, participants are responsible for cleaning and sanitizing their workstation.
- All plating must be safe to serve and edible.
- Participants will complete the challenge using only the materials identified in the guidelines. Previously prepared materials may not be accessed or utilized during this competition.
- Once all participants have completed their challenges, the session will reconvene and receive feedback from the panel of evaluators, including strengths of the entries, as well as areas for growth.
- The participant receiving the highest score in each level will be recognized in a presentation at the recognition session at the Montana FCCLA State Leadership Conference. The decision of the evaluators is final.
- Participants not attending the entire Culinary Arts Connections session will not be permitted to participate.
- Advisers will receive challenge feedback electronically within one week of the closing of the State Leadership Conference.
- Scoring criteria for the challenge includes:
 - Safety & Sanitation
 - Creativity & Culinary Skills
 - Time Management & Cleanup

Blade and Board CHALLENGE



PREPARATION

- Participants are encouraged to review the Montana FCCLA Blade and Board Challenge criteria prior to the event.

PROCEDURES

- The Montana FCCLA Blade and Board Challenge provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate safe, sanitary, and precise use of knives in a timed, structured setting.
- Supplies provided to each participant include: 1 paring knife, 1 chef's knife, 1 paper plate (to present best cuts for judging), 1 potato, 1 carrot, and paper towels. **Participants should not expect that requests for additional supplies will be fulfilled.**
- **Each participant is required to bring one cutting board, size and material of their choice, to the training.**
- The following challenge format will be used:
 - Setup (5 minutes): Each participant will arrange his/her items in the assigned space. Participants must work within the given space provided during the challenge.
 - Four Knife Cuts: The challenge coordinator will announce each required cut, one at a time (5 minutes each; 20 minutes total). Each round of the challenge includes:
 - Practice Time (4 minutes per cut): Participants may practice making the assigned cut using their ingredients.
 - Selection Time (1 minute per cut): Participants will place their two best examples of the assigned cut on their paper plate for judging.
 - Judging & Cleanup (5 minutes): Plates are placed on the judging table. Only the best two cuts for each category will be considered. Judges will review entries while students clean and sanitize their workstations.
- Participants are required to demonstrate proper knife handling, safety and sanitation at all times.
- Participants may not utilize any support materials during any portion of the event.
- Once all judging is completed, the session will reconvene and participants will receive feedback from the evaluators, including strengths, as well as areas for growth.
- The participant receiving the highest score on the rubric in each level will be recognized in a presentation at the recognition session at the Montana FCCLA State Leadership Conference. The decision of the evaluators is final.
- Advisers will receive challenge feedback electronically within one week of the closing of the State Leadership Conference.
- Scoring criteria for the challenge includes:
 - Safety & Sanitation
 - Precision of Knife Cuts
 - Cleanup



Early Childhood CONNECTIONS

2026 STATE LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE

ALL NEW PARTICIPATION OPTION FOR 2026!

Do you have what it takes to excel in the field of Early Childhood Education? Attendees will explore potential careers and develop essential skills, enhancing their employability in the Early Childhood field, then show off what they have learned with the Montana FCCLA Ultimate Toy Design Challenge and the Situational Solutions Challenge!

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

State Leadership Conference attendees in **grades 7-12** with an interest in learning more about Early Childhood Education careers

SESSION FORMAT

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|-------------|---|
| 11:00-12:00 | Welcome and Overview
Understanding how children learn at different stages and the importance of play, exploration, and learning toys |
| 12:00-12:45 | Lunch |
| 12:45-1:15 | Panel discussion with Early Childhood industry experts--Learn about industry trends, qualities of successful employees, and Early Childhood opportunities in FCCLA and at MSU |
| 1:15-2:30 | Montana FCCLA Ultimate Toy Design Challenge: Work cooperatively with other attendees to apply your understanding of developmental stages and learning toys, designing an educational toy that addresses a child's needs in a specific scenario, then pitching the concept to evaluators. |
| 2:30-3:00 | Montana FCCLA Situational Solutions Challenge: Participants independently review a case study related to early childhood education, prepare a proposed solution to the situation, and share the solution and rationale with evaluators.
Evaluators share feedback with attendees; attendees reflect and complete session surveys |

ELIGIBILITY

- Participation is open to all attendees registered for and attending the full Early Childhood Connection Training. Competitions will occur at three levels; Level 1 (up to grade 8), Level 2 (grades 9-10) and Level 3 (grades 11-12).
- Attendees not in attendance for the full session are ineligible to participate. Participants must meet all requirements for the State Leadership Conference and agree to adhere to all policies of the conference.

Ultimate Toy Design CHALLENGE

PREPARATION

- Attendees are responsible for providing their own writing instruments.
- Attendees are prohibited from bringing and using any support devices during this event, including cell phones.
- Attendees are encouraged to review The Ultimate Toy Design Challenge criteria prior to attendance.

PROCEDURES

- Attendees will be randomly assigned one partner from the roster of attendees and a presentation time for the event.
- Each team will receive a scenario describing the child's age and the concept the toy is to teach, then collaborate and sketch a toy to support a child's learning of the specified concept.
- Each team will design a learning toy using inexpensive, common household materials.
- Each team will receive three sheets of sketching paper and three notecards.
- Attendees are responsible for providing their own writing instruments.
- Attendees are prohibited from bringing and using any support devices during this event, including cell phones.
- Attendees will complete a sketch of the toy and create a supply list of materials required to create the toy.
- Attendees will develop a 3-5 minute pitch-style presentation for the toy, describing why their creation is the ultimate learning toy. Participants will receive a one-minute warning at four minutes, and stopped at five minutes.
- Notecards may be used during the presentation.
- Upon completion of each presentation, judges will have one minute to ask questions of the team.
- Once all teams have completed their presentations, the session will reconvene and receive feedback from the panel of evaluators, including strengths of the designs, as well as areas for growth.
- The team receiving the highest score on the rubric in each level will be recognized in a presentation at the recognition session at the Montana FCCLA State Leadership Conference.
- The decision of the evaluators is final.
- Participants arriving late to their scheduled interview time will not be permitted to participate.
- Advisers will receive challenge feedback electronically within one week of the closing of the State Leadership Conference.
- Scoring criteria for the challenge includes:
 - Appropriateness of toy to teach the concept
 - Appeal and developmental appropriateness of the toy to the assigned audience
 - Consideration of safety concerns
 - Overall pitch, tone, speaking skills and body language
 - Teamwork and collaboration demonstrated
 - Grammar, word choice, and pronunciation
 - Overall neatness of sketch

Situational Solutions **CHALLENGE**

PREPARATION

- Attendees are responsible for providing their own writing instruments.
- Attendees are prohibited from bringing and using any support devices during this event, including cell phones.
- Attendees are encouraged to review The Situational Solutions Challenge criteria prior to attendance

PROCEDURES

- Attendees will be provided a scenario describing a child's age and a challenging situation. Scenarios may be focused on behavioral issues and/or developmental issues.
- Each attendee will be provided one index card to make notes about the scenario and five minutes to develop a solution to the situation.
- Each attendee will have up to three minutes to share the scenario and the solution he/she has developed. Attendees will receive a one-minute warning at two minutes, and stopped at three minutes.
- Attendees are encouraged to include in their presentation a description of why the solution is developmentally appropriate and how it aligns with current best practices in the field of early childhood education.
- The notecard provided may be used during the presentation.
- Upon completion of each presentation, judges will have one minute to ask questions of the attendee.
- Once all presentations have concluded, the session will reconvene and attendees will receive feedback from the panel of evaluators, including strengths of the proposed solutions, as well as areas for growth.
- The attendee receiving the highest score in each level will be recognized in a presentation at the recognition session at the Montana FCCLA State Leadership Conference.
- The decision of the evaluators is final.
- Participants arriving late to their scheduled interview time will not be permitted to participate.
- Advisers will receive challenge feedback electronically within one week of the closing of the State Leadership Conference.
- Scoring criteria for the challenge includes:
 - Proposed solution provided for the scenario
 - Justification of the solution
 - Creativity and practicality of the solution
 - Overall pitch, tone, speaking skills and body language