State of New Mexico
Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

September 27, 2007

TO: Governor Bill Richardson
Members of the New Mexico Legislature
Members of the Child Development Board
New Mexicans and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Secretary Veronica C. García and Secretary Dorian Dodson

SUBJECT: 2006-2007 PreK (Pre-Kindergarten) Annual Report

We are pleased to present the second New Mexico PreK Annual Report.
Included in the report is summary information about:

♦ Second year implementation of the voluntary state funded PreK program
♦ Program accountability and evaluation
♦ New Mexico PreK Observational Assessment Data

The champions of PreK include Governor Bill Richardson, Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish, the New Mexico Legislature, parents, teachers and local program directors as well as staff from New Mexico’s Public Education Department, Children, Youth & Families Department; and the Department of Finance and Administration. Congratulations on a job well done!

We look forward to working together to expand the PreK program for 2007-2008.

Veronica C. García
Cabinet Secretary
Public Education Department

Dorian Dodson
Cabinet Secretary
Children Youth & Families Department
Parents Know that PreK Works

Parent engagement is an essential component of the voluntary PreK Initiative and all programs are required to have a “Parent Engagement Plan”.

What do parents say about PreK?

“My child attended a NM PreK program all last year. In that time he has learned a great deal of things. He has learned it is ok to be away from home and how to make friends. He has also learned his ABC’s and his numbers up to 15. My son tells me that he has learned how to be nice to other kids, how not to touch things that belong to others, how to sing silly songs, eat things that are good for him, how to recognize some words and how school is too much fun. I love all of the teachers at this school. They are supportive to not only the children but to the families as well.”

“My daughter participated in NM PreK this past school year. She learned a great deal while having fun. She can write both her first and last name, can count to twenty, and has learned to recognize her letters. When I took her to kindergarten registration, she was tested in a variety of ways and passed all with flying colors. Not only did my daughter learn academics, she also learned and grew socially as well. She learned how to share and play with other children her age. She learned through dramatic play about different types of jobs and careers, I am very grateful my daughter was able to participate in NM PreK.”

“Enrolling our four year old daughter in NM PreK has been one of the best decisions our family has made. She has learned so much and she is having the time of her life. Teachers are very creative and are always introducing new things for the children. We are very happy with this PreK program and believe every child should have the opportunity to attend and benefit from it.”

“My child is an only child and had a hard time adjusting with being around children her own age. Now she is very social and can play well with others. The level of care and love expressed by her teachers are just absolutely wonderful. Her personality and education have blossomed in PreK. She knows and writes her ABC’s, knows some basic math and can read some words.”

“I am a level three special education preschool teacher. My daughter attended a NM PreK program. Without this opportunity she would not have been able to attend a quality preschool. The team has helped nurture my daughter to prepare her for kindergarten. She can name numbers and use one to one correspondence to 15. She is able to retell stories, recall information about stories and answer questions. Most importantly, from an educator’s background, she has good impulse control. She is able to stand in a line, raise her hand and wait her turn. She is ready for kindergarten. Thank you, Governor Richardson for allowing my child to partake in the PreK Initiative and for giving other families the same opportunity for laying the foundation for school success.”

How Does PreK Measure the Growth, Development and Learning that Parents Observe?

New Mexico has developed Early Learning Outcomes for four-year-olds in seven different domains:

- Literacy
- Numeracy & Spatial Relations
- Self, Family & Community
- Approaches to Learning
- Scientific/Conceptual Understanding
- Aesthetic/Creativity
- Physical Development, Health & Well-Being

Research reinforces that a balanced program that encourages and tracks learning in all these domains is necessary for long-term success in school and in life. Indicators of growth and learning in each domain help teachers track children’s development toward the Outcomes.
These Outcomes are what we can reasonably expect children to KNOW, BE ABLE TO DO, and the necessary DISPOSITIONS TOWARD LEARNING that children need to be successful when they enter Kindergarten.

New Mexico PreK has developed a criterion-referenced Observation and Documentation Assessment process to:

- Document child growth and development in all seven domains
- Inform curriculum and purposeful practice in the PreK classroom
- Measure individual progress in meeting the New Mexico Early Learning Outcomes, and
- Serve as a communication tool with families and the receiving Kindergarten teacher.

In order to assess children's progress toward the NM PreK Early Learning Outcomes, children are formally observed for behaviors that indicate their progress toward the outcomes on a three-point rubric. These observations indicate if the child is at first steps toward the outcomes, making progress toward the outcomes or fully accomplishing the outcomes. The rubrics describe behaviors specific to each of the early learning outcomes/indicators. It is essential to continually observe for and identify where children are in relation to the expected outcomes. This enables each teacher to clearly see and support continuous learning and development.

Not every child is expected to accomplish every outcome or indicator at the highest rubric level. Each child will demonstrate growth from the beginning to the end of the NM PreK experience. The outcomes and indicators guide the instructors by establishing reasonable expectations and benchmarks for children’s learning and performance. With those expectations, then, each child can be identified as performing at some point on a continuum of progress toward an outcome.

Assessments in Literacy, Numeracy & Spatial Relations, Self, Family & Community, and Approaches to Learning underscore the parent quotes we have included. The figures below show the growth of PreK children in each of these domains over the 06-07 school year. For example, in Figure 1 Literacy, we can see that in the Fall 39% of children were at Beginning or First Steps, while only 12% were in the Accomplished category. By the end of the year children at Beginning or First Steps decreased to only 3% and children in the Accomplished category rose to 69%.

Figure I: Literacy - Percent Comparison Fall to Spring
Figure 2: Numeracy & Spatial Relations—Percent Comparisons Fall to Spring

Figure 3: Self, Family & Community Percent Comparisons

Figure 4: Approaches to Learning Percent Comparisons

For more information on the Early Learning Outcomes and a complete set of the observation and documentation assessment tools go to www.NewMexicoPreK.org
Teachers Know that PreK Works

What do teachers say about PreK?

Teachers overwhelmingly support PreK, noting the growth that takes place in children over the year and often citing the quality professional development provided by New Mexico PreK that has increased their skills and strategies in teaching young children.

“Being part of NM PreK has opened my eyes to many aspects of teaching. It has allowed me to attend teacher conferences and special training that helped me become a better teacher and meet the needs of the young children of Mescalero.”

“The use of observational assessments has helped staff not only become better observers of children but better planners of activities that address the needs of children and ensure their continued academic and social growth.”

“One of our NM PreK teachers has been so impressed with the authentic assessment methods of NM PreK that she has showed her mother (another preschool teacher) the method. I also learned much from the trainings and am teaching authentic assessment techniques to my early childhood college students at UNM, some of whom will be PreK teachers.”

Using the observation and documentation tools, teachers also assess children in the Scientific/Conceptual Understanding and Aesthetic/Creativity domains. The tremendous growth, development and learning of PreK children is depicted in the Summary of Overall Performance. Figures 5, 6 and 7 depict these results.

**Figure 5: Scientific/Conceptual Understanding Percent Comparisons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Children</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Steps</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Progress</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplished</td>
<td>63</td>
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**Figure 6: Aesthetic Creativity Percent Comparisons**

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Internationally-Recognized Early Childhood Experts Recognize that New Mexico PreK Works

Accountability and Evaluation

In addition to the classroom observational assessments conducted by program staff and the monitoring of program compliance conducted by PED and CYFD program coordinators, the Office of Education Accountability (DFA) contracted with the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) to evaluate the New Mexico PreK initiative as a whole. Their first report, *The Effects of the New Mexico PreK Initiative on Young Children’s School Readiness*, found that the New Mexico PreK initiative has a statistically significant and meaningful impact on children’s early language, literacy and mathematical development. Specifically NM PreK increased children’s vocabulary growth by 54% over the year. This outcome is particularly important because the measure is strongly predictive of general cognitive abilities and later reading success. Children who attended NM PreK scored higher on a test of children’s early math skills showing 40% more growth over the year. Skills tested include basic number concepts, simple addition and subtraction, telling time and counting money. And, NM PreK increased children’s print awareness by more than doubling growth - 118% more - over the year. Children who attended New Mexico PreK before entering Kindergarten know more letters, more letter-sound associations and are more familiar with words and book concepts than their counterparts without PreK.
Because it works, more and more parents want their children to participate in NM PreK every year!

There are now PreK programs in virtually every region of the state. In school year 2006-07 the Public Education Department served 1,097 children in 54 classrooms in 17 programs in 33 locations; the Children, Youth and Families Department served 1,097 children in 51 classrooms in 24 programs in 45 locations; totaling 2,194 children in 105 classrooms in 78 locations. School year 07-08 has expanded the PED PreK offerings to include an additional 1,786 children in 87 classrooms, in 56 locations, while CYFD expanded their PreK offerings to include an additional 1,771 children in 92 classrooms in 73 locations. Figures 9 and 10 show the growth in the numbers of children being served and in the number of locations throughout the state over the past two years.

Figure 9: PreK Student Growth 2006-07—2007-08
Figure 10: PreK Location Growth 2006-07—2007-08

Conclusions

Results over a two-year period provide strong evidence that the New Mexico PreK initiative has had positive effects on children’s learning in the areas of language, literacy, math and social skills. The findings are promising and indicate that New Mexico’s state-funded voluntary pre-kindergarten program is producing the kinds of initial effects likely to lead to increased school success and continued advantages in reading, mathematics and social skills. The meaningful effects found on children’s receptive vocabulary, math, and print awareness have been found to predict later reading abilities in the early elementary grades (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). With leadership and direction from the Governor, Lt. Governor, and the NM State Legislature, the state has moved quickly with implementation because the goal is for as many four-year-olds as possible to have access to high-quality PreK learning opportunities. Increasingly, New Mexico PreK is being viewed as a critical component of a high-quality education system that spans early childhood through higher education. Communities are able to build a strong foundation for children’s success by utilizing resources such as PreK, Reading First and K-3 Plus.
To date, the strategies implemented by New Mexico PreK have shown impressive results that need to be continued and expanded. Among the most promising and result-driven implementation strategies are:

♦ Utilizing local culture, language and history in learning activities
♦ Engaging parents and the extended family
♦ Using a mixed-delivery system to provide programs in a variety of settings to best meet community and family needs
♦ Providing quality teachers, community-driven services, parental choice and voluntary participation
♦ Following a “grow-your-own” model to support and develop early childhood educators
♦ Emphasizing professional development, technical assistance and mentoring
♦ Expanding community capacity for early learning, growth and development.

As a final image of the wonder experienced by children and teachers in New Mexico PreK, here is a story told by a family child-care teacher in Ruidoso who provides PreK to children in her home:

“We had gone to our weekly story time at the public library and when we came back into the classroom the kids saw a mommy deer right outside the big picture window. How she got up the hill to the house was a miracle! They were all excited and I tried to calm them down by asking questions about what they were seeing. For about 15-20 minutes we all watched as she licked the window (to squeals of laughter), walked back and forth, settled in the grass, and kept looking at the children as they looked at her. Then, suddenly she turned and we saw that she was giving birth to a baby! We all stared in amazement as she took off down the hill into our playground and had the baby right under our playhouse. Of course, the children couldn’t stop talking about it ….. Talk about a “teachable moment” for Scientific/Conceptual Understanding and, well, I guess for almost ALL the domains. We have talked about it, written about it and drawn it ever since it happened.”

The final word on New Mexico PreK was provided by a four-year old in Albuquerque who asked his teacher, “Excuse me, is this PreK?” When the teacher responded “Yes, it is.”, he said enthusiastically, “Well, I LIKE IT!”
2006-2007 PreK
Program Locations

Communities with two or more PreK sites:

Albuquerque:
- CYFD - 14 sites
- PED - 3 sites

Belen:
- CYFD - 2 sites

Bernalillo:
- PED - 3 sites

Central Consolidated:
- PED - 4 sites

Deming:
- CYFD - 2 sites

Española:
- CYFD - 2 sites

Gadsden:
- PED - 2 sites

Gallup-McKinley:
- PED - 6 sites

Las Cruces:
- CYFD - 7 sites

Los Lunas:
- CYFD - 2 sites
- PED - 1 site

Zuni:
- PED - 3 sites
2007-2008 PreK
Program Locations

Communities with two or more PreK sites:

PED Pre-K
Alamogordo: CYFD - 3 sites
Albuquerque: CYFD - 25 sites PED - 8 sites
Belen: CYFD - 2 sites
Bernalillo: PED - 3 sites

CYFD Pre-K
Central Consolidated: PED - 7 sites
Chaparral: CYFD - 2 sites
Deming: CYFD - 2 sites
Española: CYFD - 4 sites

PED Pre-K
Farmington: CYFD - 2 sites
Gadsden: PED - 4 sites
Gallup-McKinley: PED - 7 sites
Grants-Cibola: PED - 6 sites

Las Cruces: CYFD - 9 sites
Los Lunas: CYFD - 2 sites PED - 1 site
T or C: PED - 2 sites
West Las Vegas: PED - 2 sites