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Governor Bill Richardson Announces New Mexico PreK Gets High Marks for Preparing Kids for Kindergarten

SANTA FE, NM – Governor Bill Richardson today applauded the results of a new study by the National Institute for Early Education that shows children who attended New Mexico PreK scored higher in early math, language, and literacy than children who did not attend the program.

“PreK is an essential part of my commitment to give every New Mexico child the opportunities to succeed,” Governor Bill Richardson said. “This report shows that PreK children are entering kindergarten with the skills they need to achieve in school. Successes in elementary school will give them the academic foundation they need for their middle school and high school coursework.”

“We have studied New Mexico PreK since it started and find that even as the program has expanded, it continues to be effective,” said National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) assistant research professor Jason T. Hustedt, who led the study.

The third report in NIEER’s multi-year study of the program, “Continued Impacts of New Mexico PreK on Children’s Readiness for Kindergarten: Results from the Third Year of Implementation,” found that:

- Children who attended New Mexico PreK during the 2007-2008 school year scored higher on assessments of early math and literacy skills in comparison to children who did not attend. These skills include addition and subtraction, telling time, knowledge of letters, and familiarity with words and book concepts. Gains in early math and literacy at kindergarten entry can be attributed to participating in New Mexico PreK programs the previous year.
- Separate sets of analyses conducted for PreK programs offered by the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) and the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) show that PED and CYFD PreK programs produce similar results.
- When the researchers combined child assessment data from the first three years of the New Mexico PreK program, they found further evidence that New Mexico PreK produces positive impacts on children’s early math, language, and literacy skills.

For this fiscal year, the New Mexico Legislature appropriated a total of over \$19.8 million, including \$16.8 million from the state General Fund and \$3.0 Million in temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) support to the state-funded PreK program managed by the Public Education Department and Children, Youth and Families Department. As a result of this support, New Mexico PreK will serve nearly 5,000 four year-olds across the state in 151 sites for the school year 2009-2010.

“New Mexico’s Pre-K program is presenting a good return for the state's investment,” said Education Secretary Veronica C. García. “The program is giving our children and families a strong foundation to succeed in school and ultimately increase our graduation rate. It’s my greatest hope that all children in New Mexico have access to quality Pre-K.”

"Access to quality PreK programs, through both public schools and childcare centers, is proving to be effective in providing early education and promoting overall well-being for our state's most valuable resource - our children," Dorian Dodson, CYFD Secretary said.

The New Mexico PreK Program continues to implement proven strategies that are the most promising and results-driven, such as:

- Use local culture, language, and history in classroom learning activities
- Engage parents and the extended family
- Use a mixed-delivery system so programs in a variety of settings can best meet the needs of the family and community
- Follow a “grow-your-own” model to support and develop early childhood educators from the community
- Emphasize professional development, technical assistance and mentoring.

A large body of research shows that high-quality preschool programs can lead to increases in school success, higher test scores, fewer school dropouts, higher graduation rates, less special education, and even lower crime rates.

A copy of the report is available on the NIEER website at www.nieer.org

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