



new mexico **early childhood development** partnership

FINAL REPORT: This report presents findings from the December 1, 2016 community meeting in Hobbs, NM addressing a proposed expansion of the state-funded New Mexico PreK program.

CONVENER: New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP)
NMECDP is a public-private partnership that works with business leaders, policymakers and early childhood professionals to provide greater access to high quality early learning opportunities for New Mexico's children. The organization is dedicated to creating the public awareness and political will for investments in early childhood education in New Mexico. For more information, visit <http://nmeecd.org>

FACILITATOR: ML Consulting, LLC has been engaged to facilitate community conversations. Unfortunately, a facilitator was not available on December 1.

COMMUNITY MEETING PROCESS

The New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP) is focused on a multi-year initiative to provide full-day New Mexico PreK to every family with three- and four-year-olds who want it. NMECDP is hosting four community conversation luncheons and meetings with key stakeholders in cities throughout New Mexico. The following notes include ideas shared at the community input session with local stakeholders held in Hobbs, New Mexico on December 1, 2016.

Sixteen community stakeholders participated in the session and provided input about suggestions, benefits and challenges of the proposed expansion of NM PreK. This report includes a summary of main themes that emerged among the groups, as well as notes that capture individual ideas related to the questions asked during small group discussions.

FEEDBACK BY THEME

1. Potential Advantages of Expanding New Mexico PreK

Prepares children for success in school and life

Builds resilience and cognitive, behavioral, language, and social competence that set the stage for learning in kindergarten and beyond.

Positive impacts for families

Family education and two-generational support for families helps with parenting and supports caregivers' ability to participate in the workforce or return to school due to access to affordable, quality PreK. Engagement with PreK programs also decreases family isolation, and can connect families to community resources. Participation in PreK further can set the standard for future parent interaction with teachers.

2. Potential Challenges of Expanding New Mexico PreK

Funding

Lack of awareness of the potential benefits of PreK

The significance of the brain development occurring from birth to age five is not widely understood or appreciated. A lack of understanding about the short and long-term benefits of PreK in New Mexico exists.

Workforce issues

A significant challenge is finding and retaining quality PreK teachers given the lack of understanding of the importance of their work, the low pay and limited benefits.

3. Suggestions for NMECDP in Pursuit of NM PreK Expansion

Collaboration and coordination of local resources

Community coordination (local and state resources) and buy-in is key to expansion and improvement of quality programs, as well as to address barriers to participation including cultural philosophies, transportation and need for extended day care.

Educate and advocate

Engage usual and unusual allies and build support for expansion and develop clear, concise and meaningful messages.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES/INPUT

Input from individuals is captured next to bullet points for each of the three questions posed.

A. What do you see as the potential benefits to the proposed expansion?

- NM PreK provides a child's first important exposure to education
- Relationship building among educators and families
- Contact with families early in a child's life
- PreK as a way to connect families in rural communities
- Potential for early intervention
- PreK encourages a child's personality to blossom
- PreK inspires early language and literacy development which correlates with reading at third grade
- Support for families
- Provision of an array of special education services in PreK setting
- Social interaction
- Early detection of learning challenges
- NM PreK should be mandatory
- Participation in PreK can lead to a decrease in involvement in juvenile justice
- PreK can help to change the culture, encourage the appreciation of early learning
- Classrooms that support those with special needs
- Play-based curriculum
- Enables parents to return to school and/or work
- Connects families with social services such as healthcare

- Provides developmental screenings such as vision, hearing and safety measures such as bike helmets
- Parent empowerment
- Support of young parents
- Children are prepared to be a 3 year old or a 4 year old so they can experience success as a 5 year old
- Additional children served
- The possibility of expanding PED NM PreK to serve three-year olds with special needs
- Child development encouraged as a result of participation in PreK
- Research supports early learning
- Action is needed – NM is at the bottom of child well-being rankings
- Support/intervention with families
- Support parents as their child's first teacher
- NM PreK works well with parents, can help to set the standard for interaction among parents and educators
- Increased socio-emotional development of children enrolled in NM PreK
- Reduction of discipline and behavioral challenges at home
- Identification of delay/disabilities and finding ways to address them/early interventions

B. What do you see as the potential challenges?

- Funding
- Workforce Development/ teachers & staff (individuals with early childhood and education experience)
- Certification process (teachers often opt for elementary school license vs. PreK)
- Alternative licensure process
- Lack of respect for PreK teachers
- Lack of understanding of the importance of early learning, it is not babysitting
- Diverse and marginalized (ethnic and economic) communities
- Lack of cultural understanding of the benefits of early learning
- Home schooling does not support the development of social skills
- Fear of exposing children to school too early
- PreK is too late, not serving children earlier
- Best serving children with special needs
- Space/Facilities
- Need for physical therapists, speech therapists, etc.
- Half-day vs. full-day, community choice
- Transportation, especially for half-day programs
- Maintaining high-quality
- Community support – the need to increase awareness of the importance of birth to age 8
- Public school support, understanding of the importance of high-quality early learning

C. What suggestions might you offer the NMECDP as they explore PreK expansion?

- Messaging – early learning cannot be perceived as only a woman's issue
- Messaging – simplify statements; understand and respect the context in which statements are delivered
- Messaging - focus on birth to age 8 – link all early learning programs, stress the importance of all, focus on one unified goal, develop clear and thoughtful messages and different messages for different audiences

- Bring together a coalition of individuals including parents, teachers, faith leaders and members of the business community
- Develop a new name for the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership
- Increase supports for parents
- Provide support of ESL students and families
- Insure equal expectations and requirements for all NM PreK providers, those supported by CYFD and those supported by PED
- Clarification of all early childhood programs
- Clarify the ways in which NM PreK is evaluated
- Create increased public awareness of NM PreK