

# Looking at Pre K in Public Education

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Dymorie Maker, Lovington BOE

# *What is Pre-K?*

- Pre Kindergarten is the term used for that year prior to a child attending kindergarten; in many (but not all) states, this is for 4-year-old children. This is also sometimes referred to as Preschool, Head Start or another local term of reference.
- New Mexico PreK is (currently) a voluntary program, funded by the State of New Mexico. The NMPreK program began in 2005 to ensure that every child in New Mexico has the opportunity to attend a high quality early childhood education program before going to kindergarten.

# *How did Pre K arrive in NM?*

- Pre Kindergarten Act, 2005
- Funding divided equally between PED & CYFD
- Currently, 54/89 school districts (+ 4 charter schools) participate in NM PED Pre K
- Beginning in FY16, PED Pre K classrooms are also *FOCUS* classrooms, which refers to the Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System adopted by the State as part of the Race To the Top Challenge Grant.
- FY17 – All preschool programs (3Y, 4Y, 619, Title1) are expected to follow the FOCUS criteria

# *Why do we need Pre-K?*

- Large numbers of families need and want out-of-home care & education for their preschool children.
- Research has demonstrated that early childhood experiences strongly influence children's later development & learning.
- Evidence is mounting that quality early childhood education improves the chances for success of children who would otherwise be at risk for school failure.
- There is growing proof that early education provides a good return on investment to taxpayers.

(Getting it Right from the Start, 2009)

# The Effects of New Mexico PreK on Young Children's School Readiness

- increase in children's *VOCABULARY* scores of nearly 8 raw score points, 54 percent more growth over the year due to the program. This outcome is particularly important because the measure is strongly predictive of general cognitive abilities and later reading success.

- increased children's *PRINT AWARENESS* by nearly 26 percentage points, more than doubling growth over the year due to the program. Children who attended PreK knew more letters, more letter-sound associations and were more familiar with words and book concepts.
- increased children's *MATH SCORES* by about 2 raw score points, 40 percent more growth over the year due to the program. Skills tested include basic number concepts, simple addition and subtraction, telling time and counting money.

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The economic impact analysis suggests that there are good economic reasons to invest in PreK and the children it serves.

- PreK can improve educational outcomes by reducing the numbers of children retained in grade, lowering the number of children eligible for special education, and increasing graduation rates.
- The economic impact analysis finds that an estimated \$5.00 in benefits are generated in New Mexico for every dollar invested in PreK.
- The benefit to U.S. society is estimated at \$6.17 for every dollar invested in PreK.

- It is estimated that PreK participants will have better educational outcomes that produce higher earnings.
- They will be less likely to engage in criminal behavior, to be victims of abuse and neglect, and to use welfare services.
- The real rate of return to New Mexico's state-funded prekindergarten program is an estimated 18.1 percent to New Mexico and an estimated 22.3 percent as a whole.

# *Perry Preschool Project*

- 5 yr project – 1962-1967
- 128 children (50/50 for control group)
- 2.5 hr session, 5 day/week
- 6:1 student/teacher ratio
- Home visits included
- Total program cost = \$11,000/child
- Follow Up @ 27 yrs old & 40 yrs old

# *Evidence of Effectiveness*

## **Child at 27 yrs old**

	w/ Preschool	w/o Preschool
# yrs/school	11.9	11
# yrs rec'd Special Services	3.9	5.2
Grad Rate	65 %	45 %
OOW Birth	57 %	83 %
Teen Preg	.6 / woman	1.2 /woman

## **Child at 40 yrs old**

	w/ Preschool	w/o Preschool
Jail/Prison	28 %	52 %
Arrest for Violent Crime	32 %	48 %
Median Monthl y \$\$	\$1,856 (2003)	\$1,308 (2003)
Gov't Assistance	59 %	80 %

# *Budget for Pre-K in New Mexico*

	2005 – 2006 (1 <sup>st</sup> yr)	2017 – 2018
Total Budget	\$2,464,500	\$24,500,000
# Children Served	770 (all ½ day)	5,222 (1781 extended day)
# Districts Participating	11	54 (+ 6 State Charters)
# Teachers	37	248

# Who can attend Pre-K?

- Any child who is 4 years old on September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current year.
- NM Pre K is a *non-qualifying* program; the only requirement for admission is the age requirement. Children who are 5 years old on September 1<sup>st</sup> cannot be enrolled in NM Pre K.
- DD programs (also called 619 programs) can also utilize NM Pre K through inclusion

# *What Does it Look Like?*

- Teachers interact frequently w/ the children and provide guidance.
- There is a 'buzz' in the room, as the children interact with one another through well-planned activities.
- The room is well organized w/ a variety of learning centers w/ materials readily accessible by the children.

## *What does it look like? (con't)*

- Materials & equipment are age appropriate, adequate in amount and encourage exploration.
- The bulk of the activities are hands-on, with careful facilitation by the teacher.
- There is a routine and schedule, but it allows for flexibility.

(shouldn't all classrooms be like this???)

# *Language & Literacy*

- Vocabulary is THE absolute strongest predictor of a child's achievement
- Oral language (listening & speaking) generally develops naturally...children have a nearly universal tendency to learn the language they hear.
- Literacy (reading & writing) must be directly taught over many years.

# *Math & Science*

Strategies used in the classroom to support children's early mathematical concept development include:

- Counting comparing, estimating
- recognizing number symbols, classifying, separating,
- geometric shapes, and spatial relations.

# *The Family Connection*

- For many families, this is their first experience with public education...studies continue to show that a positive relationship with the families helps a child succeed throughout their educational experience.
- Recognizing that the family is the child's first teacher and respecting their role in the child's life is critical to a successful relationship.

# What should you see?

- Is the majority of the display on the walls the children's original work (they shouldn't all look alike)...Remember, creativity focuses on the process, not the product.
- Are there clearly defined learning centers?
- Are the toys and materials in good repair?
- Is the noise in the room positive – do you hear laughter & conversations, or crying & arguing?
- Are the teachers positioning themselves at the children's level most of the time? Are they engaged with the children? Are they using materials with the children?

# Using Observation to gather DATA

## **ECOT (Preschool)**

- Followed the Pre-K model
- FY 16 – Pilot
- FY16 – Statewide
- Administered 3 times/yr
- 6 Developmental Domains

## **KOT (Kindergarten)**

- Followed the Pre-K model
- FY 15 – Pilot
- FY 16 – Statewide
- Administered w/i 1<sup>st</sup> 30 days
- 6 Developmental Domains

Always walk  
through life as if  
you have  
something new to  
learn...  
and you will.

- *Vernon Howard*

