

The Preschoolers Are Coming... Now What?

NMSBA Board Member Institute

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Dymorie Maker, Lovington BOE

Instructional Coaches:

Teresa Andreis (Roswell) and Rita McGrath (Farmington)

What is Pre-K?

- Pre Kindergarten is the term used for that year immediately 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.

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)

Who can attend Pre-K?

- Any child who is 4 years old on September 1st 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 1st cannot be enrolled in NM Pre K.
- DD programs (also called 619 programs) can also utilize NM Pre K through inclusion

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 %

What Does Quality Pre-K Instruction 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???)

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?

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.