The Preschoolers Are Coming... Now What?

NMSBA Board Member Institute
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Dymorrie 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 1\textsuperscript{st} of the current year.

• NM Pre K is a \textit{non-qualifying} program; the only requirement for admission is the age requirement. Children who are 5 years old on September 1\textsuperscript{st} 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

Larry Schweinhart, PhD. HighScope Education Research Foundation
# Evidence of Effectiveness

## Child at 27 yrs old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/ Preschool</th>
<th>w/o Preschool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># yrs/school</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># yrs rec’d Special Services</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad Rate</td>
<td>65 %</td>
<td>45 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OOW Birth</td>
<td>57 %</td>
<td>83 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Preg</td>
<td>.6 / woman</td>
<td>1.2 /woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Child at 40 yrs old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/ Preschool</th>
<th>w/o Preschool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jail/Prison</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td>52 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest for Violent Crime</td>
<td>32 %</td>
<td>48 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t Assistance</td>
<td>59 %</td>
<td>80 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.