

# A Recommendation for PreK Expansion



## Policy Recommendation:

Provide two years of high-quality, full-day PreK to every New Mexico family that wants it—regardless of income and location—by the year 2021.

The cost of implementing these recommendations is \$285 million over five years, with a cost of \$57 million in the first year, in addition to the current \$51 million for this fiscal year.

## The Reality

More than a third of children in New Mexico grow up in poverty. More than half of our working families are poor. That's a family of three living on an annual income of less than \$19,790.

According to research, childhood poverty is linked to poor outcomes in academics, health and employment. It may be the best predictor that an individual will raise his or her own children in poverty.

## PreK: An Effective Intervention

When children from low-income families get high-quality early learning opportunities, they escape the negative impacts of poverty on brain development and start school ready to learn. High-quality PreK gives kids a chance to succeed in school—and in life.

When compared to half-day programs, full-day PreK has been associated with increased school readiness, better attendance, enhanced social-emotional development, and better physical health.

A comprehensive, statewide system of PreK would bring tremendous benefits to thousands of children and families in New Mexico.

## New Mexico PreK:

- » A voluntary, state-funded PreK program
- » A mixed delivery system—administered by the Public Education Department (PED) and the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD)—that maximizes options for parents and distributes PreK resources equally between public and private sectors
- » Financed primarily through state appropriations, with a funding increase of more than 1,000 percent since the program's inception in 2005
- » Guided by the NM Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs), which describe what children in NM PreK know and can do in all areas of early development and learning

## Why invest in NM PreK?

- » **ROI:** By reducing costs to schools and society, NM PreK represents \$4.60 in long-term savings and benefits for every dollar invested. PreK generates stronger earning potential in our workforce and boosts tax revenues for a more robust economy.
- » **Benefits:** Research confirms that high-quality PreK can increase school readiness, reduce grade repetition, decrease special education placement and lower juvenile delinquency.
- » **Long-term Impact:** Analyses tracking PreK attendees into adulthood have documented better achievement test scores, increased high school graduation rates, higher rates of college attendance and greater earnings. PreK alumni have reduced likelihood of crime, welfare dependency, and health risk behaviors.

## NM PreK by the Numbers:

49

*NM's ranking in overall child well-being, according to the national KIDS COUNT data center*

35,000

*Number of three- and four-year-olds who lack access to early learning opportunities*

61,000

*Number of children served by NM PreK since 2005*

8 out of 10

*NIEER quality benchmarks that New Mexico met in 2014 (up from two benchmarks in 2002)*

90

*Percentage of kids who made measurable strides in school readiness while attending NM PreK in the 2013-2014 school year*

\$3 Million

*Annual savings from reductions in special education placement and grade retention*

More than  
\$183 Million

*Current net benefits per NM PreK cohort*

## Widespread Support of PreK

According to a new national study by the First Five Years Fund, released in October 2015, more than 75 percent of American voters support increasing federal investment to help states expand access to high-quality early childhood programs for low- and moderate-income families—that's 59 percent of Republican, 69 percent of Independent, and 94 percent of Democratic voters.

## Committed to Quality

From 2005–2010, The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) evaluated New Mexico PreK, using a set of 10 regulatory benchmarks. Based on kindergarten entry assessment scores, the NIEER evaluators concluded that, over a five-year period, NM PreK produced statistically significant positive impacts in language, literacy, and mathematics—the three areas most critical to long-term academic success. Based on its evaluation, NIEER recommended that NM PreK expand further to serve more of New Mexico's four-year-olds.

The fact that enrollment in NM PreK has nearly tripled since 2010 suggests that NM is capable of expanding access without compromising quality.

## The Time is Now

New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP) recommends that New Mexico expand our mixed delivery system to provide full-day New Mexico PreK to 80 percent of the state's three- and four-year-olds within five years. This expansion would give access to voluntary, high-quality PreK services to a projected 24,558 additional children.

To learn more about NMECDP's recommendations or the benefits of NMPreK, please contact NMECDP:

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