

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

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December 14, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: David Harrell

**RE: STAFF REPORT: *EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION ACT,*
(LAWS 2011)**

Introduction

Legislation enacted in 2011 created the *Early Childhood Care and Education Act* (ECCEA), whose purpose is “to establish a comprehensive early childhood care and education system through an aligned continuum of state and private programs, including home visitation, early intervention, child-care, early head start, head start, early childhood special education, family support and pre-kindergarten, and to maintain or establish the infrastructure necessary to support quality in the system’s programs” (see Attachment 1).

While a long history of legislative interest in early childhood preceded the enactment of the ECCEA (see “Background,” below), several targeted efforts led to this bill in particular. As outlined in a report by New Mexico First, these efforts began in November 2009, with the New Mexico Summit on Early Childhood Investment, hosted by the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership, or NMECDP (see Attachment 2). Following the summit, the NMECDP hosted a number of public meetings involving business leaders, especially as represented by the New Mexico Business Roundtable (NMBR); policymakers; leaders and experts in early childhood; and national consultants. The NMECDP also participated in

gatherings hosted by other early childhood organizations. Other efforts included a series of discussions in several communities conducted by Viewpoint Learning, a public dialogue organization; a series of town halls addressing the needs of youth and families organized by New Mexico First; a six-part television series aired on KNME-TV; a survey of business and community leaders, tribal leaders, and state legislators to measure awareness and perceived need for early childhood development programs in New Mexico; and collaboration with early childhood experts at the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) and the several early childhood programs that CYFD oversees. Supporting these efforts is a five-year grant of \$1.2 million from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to United Way of Santa Fe County.

Of particular note was a meeting in May 2010 co-hosted by the NMBR and the NMECDP, which resulted in agreement on seven principles addressing learning and development, standards, teachers and providers, parents, accountability, partnerships, and evaluation and return on investment. According to the NMECDP, these principles formed the core of the ECCEA (see Attachment 3).

This staff report and presentation will provide an overview of the provisions of the ECCEA and the work toward implementation of the act. The staff report concludes with a brief background section highlighting the long-standing interest of the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) in early childhood education.

Overview of the *Early Childhood Care and Education Act*

As perhaps the primary means of achieving the purpose described above, the ECCEA creates the State Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). Attached to CYFD, ELAC comprises 15 members, as follows:

- three *ex officio* members:
 - the Secretary of Public Education or designee;
 - the Secretary of CYFD or designee; and
 - the director of the Head Start State Collaboration office within CYFD; and
- twelve other members, most of them appointed by the Governor for staggered four-year terms, no more than five of whom may be from the same political party:
 - one representative from an institution of higher education;
 - one representative of a local educational agency;
 - one representative from a Head Start or Early Head Start organization;
 - two providers of early care and education services, at least one of whom represents a privately owned provider;
 - one representative from the state agency responsible for programs under Section 619 or Part C of the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA);
 - one representative from the state agency responsible for children's health or mental health care issues;

- two public members with knowledge and experience in early childhood care and education programs; and
- three members of the NMBR appointed by and with terms set by the Board of Directors.

To date, seven of the 12 members have been appointed:

- Ms. Peggy Soria, local educational agency;
- Mr. Andy Gomm, Part C-IDEA Early Intervention;
- Ms. Barbara Tedrow, a provider of early care and education;
- Ms. Ruth Kie, a public member; and
- Mr. Larry Langley, Ms. Lillian Montoya-Rael, and Ms. Polly Anderson, NMBR.

Among its other provisions, the ECCEA:

- allows ELAC to form subcommittees, including non-council members with appropriate expertise or interest, to make recommendations to the council;
- provides for vacancies to be filled in the same manner as the original appointment for the duration of the unexpired terms;
- stipulates that members are subject to removal only for incompetence, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office;
- designates ELAC as the required federal Head Start program council;
- requires ELAC to lead development or enhancement of a high-quality system that ensures statewide coordination and collaboration among certain specified programs;
- creates the Early Childhood Care and Education Fund, a non-reverting fund administered by CYFD for carrying out the provisions of the act; and
- allows ELAC to apply for grants and funds from any source, and to contract with any federal or state agency or private organization, to further the purposes of the act.

Finally, the ECCEA:

- requires ELAC to make recommendations to CYFD and the Legislature on the most efficient and effective way to leverage state and federal early childhood program funds, including grant applications by CYFD; and
- requires ELAC to make recommendations to CYFD and the Legislature on the coordination and alignment of an early childhood care and education system, recommendations that take a number of factors into consideration, among them:
 - the consolidation and coordination of funding streams;
 - a seamless transition from prenatal to early childhood programs to kindergarten;
 - the parent’s “decisive role in the planning, operation and evaluation of programs that aid families in the care and education of children”;
 - the development and management of effective data collection systems;
 - the diversity and cultural heritage of families and communities;
 - professional development for providers; and
 - the establishment of an effective administrative framework.

Implementation of the ECCEA

Much of the work toward implementing the ECCEA was developed during an implementation session in April 2011, convened in Santa Fe by the NMECDP, CYFD, and the NMBR and organized by New Mexico First. Participants included not only representatives of the agencies and organizations already mentioned, but also representatives of the Public Education Department (PED), the Department of Health, United Way of Santa Fe County, the University of New Mexico Center for Education Policy Research, the Legislative Finance Committee, Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center, St. Joseph Community Health, and several early childhood organizations or associations, some from other states. Also attending were several early childhood providers and two state senators.

Implementation Teams

According to the final report by New Mexico First, the key outcomes of this implementation session were the recognition of the need for an aligned plan to ensure “statewide coordination in establishing a comprehensive early childhood care and education system in New Mexico” and the formation of four implementation teams to create action plans to develop such a system. The teams and some of the components of their action plans are listed below.

- Two of the priorities of the Data Systems and Outcomes Team will be (1) evaluating current and future data collection and linkage needs and (2) developing a means of tracking individual children through the education system from pre-natal to early childhood to kindergarten to higher education. This team will also be addressing such data issues as security and protection of privacy, identifying additional resources, and developing strategies to communicate the data outputs to all stakeholders.
- The School Readiness Team will study and recommend a definition of the term “school readiness” and determine ways to measure and achieve school readiness.
- The Quality Standards Team will study early childhood governance issues and develop an aligned governance plan, increase quality standards and requirements for early childhood teachers and administrators in programs from birth to grade 3, pursue several approaches to informing legislators and the public at large about the importance of early childhood education, and align PED with early childhood professionals in CYFD “to build relationships and understanding among the groups.”
- Finally, the Funding Strategies Team will link high-quality standards to funding, examine existing funding streams, develop funding strategies, and “consider multiple funding mechanisms” that provide broad access to high-quality programs.

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Application

Another source of funding to implement the ECCEA may come from a federal grant. In October 2011, New Mexico joined 34 other states in applying for an Early Learning Challenge grant through the federal Race to the Top program. If awarded, the grant will provide up to \$50.0

million over a five-year period. The US Department of Education (USDE) indicates that the grants will be awarded by December 31, 2011; however, state officials expect to be notified by mid-December.

As described by the USDE, the purpose of the Early Learning Challenge grant is “to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and services and close the achievement gap for children with high needs.” The focus of the competitive grant is on “improving early learning and development for young children” by supporting a state’s efforts “to design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning and development programs and services and to increase the number of children with high needs enrolled in those programs and services.” The USDE further explains that the “overarching goal [of the program] is to make sure that many more children, especially children with high needs, enter kindergarten ready to succeed.”

Finally, on a related point, the USDE recently announced a proposal to create the Office of Early Learning, within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. This new office will be charged with overseeing the Early Learning Challenge grants and coordinating early learning programs across the USDE.

Background

As noted above, one of the tasks of the Quality Standards Team is to help inform legislators about the importance of early childhood education. In the case of the members of the LESC, much of that work has already been done.

During virtually every interim from the early 1990s to this presentation in December 2011, the LESC has heard testimony about the value of early childhood care and education and has supported a wide variety of efforts to enhance the educational and developmental opportunities for New Mexico’s youngest children. Over those years, the committee has participated in or heard testimony about such initiatives as:

- full-day kindergarten;
- research on early childhood education, including early brain development and the long-lasting effects of experiences in early childhood;
- surveys of programs offered through the public schools;
- the preparation and compensation of early childhood professionals;
- appropriate training and materials to help licensed child-care providers acquire literacy and reading readiness skills;
- the Kindergarten Plus Pilot Project and its successor program, K-3 Plus;
- a plan for the alignment of early education programs in New Mexico developed by the Early Childhood Interagency Action Team, in response to two joint memorials that the LESC had endorsed during the 2003 session; and
- the *Pre-Kindergarten Act*, which the LESC also endorsed, and the program conducted pursuant to that act, New Mexico PreK.

Through all of these studies, reports, and presentations, one theme was pervasive: the need for greater statewide coordination of early childhood services. The ECCEA is intended to meet that need.

Presenters

For this presentation, several people involved in the development and implementation of the ECCEA will provide more details:

- Ms. Lillian Montoya-Rael, State Director, NMECDP, will provide a brief overview of the work, including the role of the NMECDP, and introduce the panelists and their topics;
- Ms. Katherine Freeman, Chair, New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership, will address the implementation of the ECCEA in general;
- Ms. Diana Martinez-Gonzales, Director, Early Childhood Services, CYFD, will describe the role and activities of CYFD and the ELAC, as well as indicate some of the plans for the Early Learning Challenge Grant;
- Ms. Hanna Skandera, Secretary-designate of Public Education, will describe the role and activities of PED;
- Mr. Larry Langley, President and Chief Executive Officer, NMBR, will describe the role of the NMBR and the business community's interest in early childhood care and education;
- Ms. Heather Balas, President and Executive Director, New Mexico First, will explain the role of New Mexico First not only with the implementation teams but also with community meetings; and
- Dr. Peter Winograd, Director, Center for Education Policy Research, University of New Mexico, will present a variety of data about early childhood care and education.

ARTICLE 23A
Early Childhood Care and Education

Section

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|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 32A-23A-1 | Short title. |
| 32A-23A-2 | Definitions. |
| 32A-23A-3 | Findings and purpose. |
| 32A-23A-4 | State early learning advisory council created; membership. (Repealed effective July 1, 2018.) |
| 32A-23A-5 | Council and department duties. |
| 32A-23A-6 | Early childhood care and education fund; created; purpose; administration; grant applications. |
| 32A-23A-7 | Termination of agency life; delayed repeal. |

32A-23A-1. Short title.

This act may be cited as the "Early Childhood Care and Education Act".

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 1.

Effective dates. — Laws 2011, ch. 123 contained no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, was effective June 17, 2011, 90 days after the adjournment of the legislature.

32A-23A-2. Definitions.

As used in the Early Childhood Care and Education Act:

- A. "council" means the state early learning advisory council;
- B. "department" means the children, youth and families department;
- C. "early childhood" means from prenatal to the age of five years;
- D. "fund" means the early childhood care and education fund;
- E. "pre-kindergarten" means a voluntary developmental readiness program for children who have attained their fourth birthday prior to September 1; and
- F. "secretary" means the secretary of children, youth and families.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 2.

Effective dates. — Laws 2011, ch. 123 contained no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, was effective June 17, 2011, 90 days after the adjournment of the legislature.

32A-23A-3. Findings and purpose.

A. The legislature finds that an early childhood care and education system is vital in ensuring that every New Mexico child is eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time that child enters kindergarten, that high-quality early learning experiences have been proven to prepare children for success in school and later in life and that cost-benefit research demonstrates a high return on investment for money spent on early childhood care and education for at-risk children.

B. The legislature further finds that, to be successful, an early childhood care and education system should be:

- (1) developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate and include the implementation of program models, standards and curriculum based on research and best practices;
- (2) data-driven, including the identification and prioritization of communities most at risk while striving to make the system universally available to all those who wish to participate;
- (3) accountable through developmentally appropriate methods of measuring, reporting and tracking a child's growth and development and the improvement of the system's programs;
- (4) accessible, especially to those children most at risk for school failure;
- (5) of the highest possible quality through the utilization of qualified practitioners who have completed specialized training in early childhood growth, development and learning that is specific to the practitioner's role in the system and the maintenance of quality rating methods for the programs in the system;
- (6) fully aligned within each community to ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources by combining funding sources and supporting seamless transitions for children within the system and for children transitioning into kindergarten;
- (7) family-centered by recognizing that parents are the first and most important teachers of their children and providing the support and referrals necessary for parents to assume this critical role in their child's development; and
- (8) a partnership between the state and private individuals or institutions with an interest or expertise in early childhood care and education.

C. The purpose of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act is to establish a comprehensive early childhood care and education system through an aligned continuum of state and private programs, including home visitation, early intervention, child care, early head start, head start, early childhood special education, family support and pre-kindergarten, and to maintain or establish the infrastructure necessary to support quality in the system's programs. History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 3.

Effective dates. — Laws 2011, ch. 123 contained no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, was effective June 17, 2011, 90 days after the adjournment of the legislature.

32A-23A-4. State early learning advisory council created; membership. (Repealed effective July 1, 2018.)

- A. The "state early learning advisory council" is created. The council is attached to the department.
- B. The council consists of fifteen members. The secretary of public education or the secretary's designee, the secretary of children, youth and families or the secretary's designee and the director of the head start state collaboration office of the department shall serve ex officio. The remaining members shall be qualified electors and, if appointment is not otherwise provided in this subsection, shall be appointed by the governor for four-year terms expiring on January 1 of the appropriate year. Council members appointed by the governor shall serve staggered terms as determined by the governor at the time of their initial appointment, and no more than five of the governor's appointees shall be from the same political party. Along with the ex-officio members, the council shall consist of the following members:

- (1) one representative of an institution of higher education;
- (2) one representative of a local educational agency;
- (3) one representative from a head start or early head start organization;
- (4) two providers of early care and education services, at least one of whom shall represent a privately owned provider;
- (5) one representative of a state agency responsible for programs under Section 619 or Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- (6) one representative of the state agency responsible for children's health or mental health care issues;
- (7) three members of the New Mexico business roundtable for educational excellence, appointed by and whose terms shall be set by the roundtable's board of directors; and
- (8) two public members with knowledge and experience in early childhood care and education.

C. Annually, the members shall designate a chair and vice chair from the members of the council.

D. A majority of the members constitutes a quorum for the conduct of business. The council shall meet at the call of the chair, and the chair shall coordinate the activities of the council.

E. The council may form subcommittees or task forces needed to make recommendations to the council. Task force members may include individuals who are not members of the council but have an interest or expertise in early childhood education, health care or related matters.

F. Members of the council shall not be removed except for incompetence, neglect of duty or malfeasance in office. A vacancy in the membership of the council occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment, but for the unexpired term only.

G. Council members shall not be paid nor shall they receive per diem and mileage as provided in the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 NMSA 1978].

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 4.

Delayed repeals. — For delayed repeal of this section, see 32A-23A-7 NMSA 1978.

Effective dates. — Laws 2011, ch. 123 contained no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, was effective June 17, 2011, 90 days after the adjournment of the legislature.

32A-23A-5. Council and department duties.

A. The council is designated as the council required pursuant to the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. The council shall fulfill all the duties required under the federal act for early childhood care and education. The council shall also lead the development or enhancement of a high-quality, comprehensive system of early childhood development and care that ensures statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide range of early childhood programs and services within the state, including child care, early head start, head start, federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act programs for preschool, infants and families and pre-kindergarten programs and services.

B. The council and department may apply for and accept gifts, grants, donations or bequests for the fund from any source, public or private, and enter into contracts or other transactions with any federal or state agency, any private organization or any other source in furtherance of the purpose of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act.

C. In addition to the duties assigned to the council under federal law, the council shall:

(1) make recommendations to the department and the legislature on the most efficient and effective way to leverage state and federal funding for early childhood care and education, including on grant applications made by the department to benefit the fund; and

(2) make recommendations to the department and the legislature on how to coordinate and align an early childhood care and education system to include child care, pre-kindergarten, home visitation, early head start, head start, early childhood special education, early intervention and family support and to provide New Mexico families with consistent access to appropriate care and education services. In developing recommendations, the council shall:

(a) consider how to consolidate and coordinate resources and public funding streams for early childhood care and education and ensure the accountability and coordinated development of all early childhood care and education services;

(b) consider a system of seamless transition from prenatal to early childhood programs to kindergarten;

(c) take into account a parent's decisive role in the planning, operation and evaluation of programs that aid families in the care and education of children;

(d) examine ways to provide consumer education and accessibility to early childhood care and education resources;

(e) consider the advancement of quality early childhood care and education programs in order to support the healthy development of children and preparation for their success in school;

(f) consider the development of a seamless service delivery system with local points of entry for early childhood care and education programs administered by local, state and federal agencies;

(g) ensure effective collaboration with state and local child welfare programs and early childhood health and behavioral health programs;

(h) consider how to develop and manage effective data collection systems to support the necessary functions of a coordinated system of early childhood care and education and track children through the education system from prenatal to early childhood to kindergarten to higher education, in order to enable accurate evaluation of the impact of early childhood care and education;

(i) focus on the diversity, cultural heritage and strengths of the families and communities of the state;

(j) consider the development of an aligned system of professional development for professionals providing early childhood care and education; and

(k) consider the establishment of an administrative framework to promote the development of high-quality early childhood care and education services that are staffed by well-qualified professionals and are available in every community for all families that express a

need for them.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 5.

Effective dates. — Laws 2011, ch. 123 contained no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, was effective June 17, 2011, 90 days after the adjournment of the legislature.

32A-23A-6. Early childhood care and education fund; created; purpose; administration; grant applications.

A. The "early childhood care and education fund" is created as a nonreverting fund in the state treasury. The fund shall be administered by the department and shall consist of gifts, grants, donations and bequests made to the fund.

B. Money in the fund is subject to appropriation by the legislature to the department for awarding grants to the council and early childhood care and education providers for carrying out the provisions of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act.

C. The department shall adopt rules on qualifications for grants and specify the format, procedure and deadlines for grant applications. For grants to early childhood care and education providers, the council shall review all grant applications and submit those applications recommended for final approval to the secretary.

D. Disbursements from the fund shall be made upon vouchers issued and signed by the secretary or the secretary's designee upon warrants drawn by the secretary of finance and administration.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 6.

Effective dates. — Laws 2011, ch. 123 contained no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, was effective June 17, 2011, 90 days after the adjournment of the legislature.

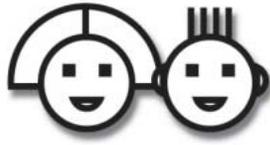
32A-23A-7. Termination of agency life; delayed repeal.

The council is terminated on July 1, 2017 pursuant to the provisions of the Sunset Act [12-9-11 NMSA 1978]. The council shall continue to operate pursuant to the provisions of Sections 4 [32A-23A-4 NMSA 1978] and 5 [32A-23A-5 NMSA 1978] of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act until July 1, 2018. Effective July 1, 2018, Section 4 of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act is repealed.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 7.

Effective dates. — Laws 2011, ch. 123 contained no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, was effective June 17, 2011, 90 days after the adjournment of the legislature.

ARTICLE 24
Child Helmet Safety Act



new mexico **early childhood development** partnership

The New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP), a public-private partnership, recognizes that when our young children are deprived of quality early life experiences the result is a lack of readiness for school and life, depriving our state of its most precious “potential” resource. The NMECDP is on a mission to create the public awareness and political will for early childhood investment in New Mexico. Funded by the Kellogg Foundation, United Way of Santa Fe County has been tasked with leading the NMECDP multi-year effort.

The work of the NMECDP includes:

- **Poverty.** Our state cannot move forward in addressing our most critical economic challenges until the effects of poverty on our families, communities, and state are minimized.
- **Research.** Investment in early childhood development has been proven to be the best strategy to minimize the effects of poverty. The last three decades of research has demonstrated that early home visiting programs and high-quality early education programs result in immediate gains for infants and children AND also result in long-term educational, financial and social benefits in adulthood. Further, careful analysis by leading economists has established that investment in early childhood programs, delivers the highest rate of return for public dollars of any long-term investment strategy.
- **Intervention.** NMECDP accepts the research which states that the "earlier the intervention, the greater the return, and the more intensive the intervention, the more effective it is."

What you can expect from the NMECDP:

- **Civic Engagement.** Across the State, the NMECDP will be creating pathways for communities and business leaders to actively engage in the early childhood conversation. Public awareness is key but public understanding and willingness to work with policy makers and the business community in effecting change in this area will be the only way for the NMECDP work to be both meaningful and sustainable statewide.
- **Public Financing Strategies.** The NMECDP will further its work in exploring various financing strategies for early childhood investment.
- **Legislative Strategies.** The NMECDP will advocate for effective public policies in the area of early care and education, specifically for Pre-Kindergarten and Home Visitation programs.
- **Collaborative Partnerships.** The NMECDP will continue to work actively with the NM Children, Youth and Families Department, NM Business Roundtable, ACI, early childhood experts and others in furthering the implementation of the New Mexico Early Care and Education Act.

Statement of Principles: Investments in the First Five Years Yield High Returns

Co-hosted by the New Mexico Business Roundtable (NMBR) and the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP), business leaders came together in May 2010 to develop Strategic Principles for their engagement in early childhood in our State. It was an ideal convening of aligned interests. The NMBR works closely with education stakeholders and policy leaders to promote and sustain federal and state education reform efforts that focus on the system-wide changes needed to help all New Mexico's students graduate from high school with the foundation skills and knowledge that prepare them to succeed in college, in the workplace and in life. The NMECDP, a public-private partnership, recognizes that when our young children are deprived of quality early life experiences the result is a lack of readiness for school and life, depriving our state of its most precious "potential" resource. As such, they are on a mission to create the public awareness and political will for early childhood in New Mexico.

In recognition of the thoughtful early childhood work and the research conducted by the national Business Roundtable (BR) (<http://www.businessroundtable.org/>), New Mexico business leaders adopted the BR's "Statement of Principles" and modified them, as appropriate, to address New Mexico-specific opportunities. The principles reflect a collective long-term commitment to improving the performance of the New Mexico education system and raising student achievement, both increasingly important for both U.S. competitiveness and for individuals to succeed in our rapidly changing world.

Statement of Principles

These Principles draw on current early childhood research, lessons from K–12 education reform efforts, and applicable lessons from the nation's experience in building a voluntary system of higher education. The seven Principles are interconnected; they are not listed in priority order. **These Principles will be used to assess existing early childhood programs; consider philanthropic priorities; evaluate policy proposals on prekindergarten, Head Start and other programs; and formulate policy positions.**

1. **LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT. A successful early childhood system views children's learning as the central mission. It should:**
 - a. Provide positive learning experiences that foster the interconnections among children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development; nurture children's strong inborn drive to learn and find joy in learning; and develop learning related skills that help children succeed in school, at work and in life;
 - b. Engage children in developmentally appropriate experiences that reflect New Mexico's established guidelines and standards for quality (e.g. Early Care, Education and Family Support: New Mexico's Best Practices - Essential Elements of Quality; Reach for the STARS: Quality Rating System)
 - c. Hold the same high expectations for success for all children while also respecting and supporting the diversity of children's families, cultures, races and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as the different ways that young children learn and the rates at which they progress; and

- d. Promote regular medical check-ups, healthy nutrition, safe environments, facilities conducive to learning, and developmental screening with effective follow-up services to treat disabilities or health problems that might affect children’s ability to learn.

2. STANDARDS. A successful early childhood system articulates standards for children’s learning and program quality that align with state K-12 academic standards. It should:

- a. Align the objectives of the early childhood system and the State’s standards in the early grades of school;
- b. Require quality transition between early learning programs into public schools where teachers, educational leaders, and parents work in partnership to assure student success in moving from one system into the next;
- c. Adopt evidence-based curriculum options and program standards that enable early childhood services to achieve and sustain results for children;
- d. Endorse research-based indicators for what children need to know and be able to do when they enter school that respect the diverse ways that children grown and learn; and
- e. Use the results of regular and appropriate diagnostic assessments for children’s performance to improve instructional practice.

3. TEACHERS & PROVIDERS. A successful early childhood system ensures that teachers and providers possess the skills, knowledge and attitudes to help young children enter school prepared to succeed. It should:

- a. Employ skilled teaching staff who have a college degree and/or demonstrated knowledge and skill commensurate with the requirements of the position and meet performance criteria (such as English verbal skills and dual language TESOL certification) to assure the ability to connect with and teach young children;
- b. Require effective preparation as well as ongoing professional development that helps staff improve the quality of their teaching, become ongoing learners about children’s development and learning and effective ways to teach, and move through an articulated, degree-granting system, where appropriate; and
- c. Institute differentiated salaries based on the experience and competencies of teachers that, given the importance of consistent relationships to children’s learning, are adequate to attract and retain a qualified teaching staff.

4. PARENTS. A successful early childhood system supports parents as their children’s first teachers and provides high-quality program options to parents who choose to enroll their children. It should:

- a. Provide access to high-quality early childhood programs for families seeking out-of-home early childhood programs for their children, regardless of their socioeconomic status;
- b. Offer seamless ways to meet the need of some families for care during the time they are working as well as the need for early learning experiences for their children; and
- c. Promote practical and effective strategies for parents to be involved in and support their children’s learning at home and in early childhood programs.

- 5. ACCOUNTABILITY. A successful early childhood system embraces accountability for measurable results. It should:**
- a. Collect the data and conduct the research needed to identify best practices, assess system performance and report these results to stakeholders;
 - b. Evaluate the overall progress of children who have participated in early childhood programs on the state's annual assessments required by the No Child Left Behind Act;
 - c. Implement continuous improvement processes that put the lessons learned from research and evaluation into program standards and practice; and
 - d. Establish incentives for meeting or exceeding objectives as well as consequences for persistent failure to achieve intended outcomes for children.
 - e. Require alignment between early learning and K-2 elementary education as a continuum of child development (birth to age 8) that is informed by developmentally appropriate practice and the science of early learning.
- 6. PARTNERSHIPS. A successful early childhood system builds crosscutting partnerships to govern, finance, sustain and improve the system. It should:**
- a. Create effective and efficient governance mechanisms that support community planning, program development and oversight;
 - b. Involve key stakeholders at the federal, state and local levels, and encourage public/private partnership to improve effectiveness, efficiency and accessibility;
 - c. Include participation among all sectors of the early childhood field within the state, including public and private programs as well as those that take place in schools, centers and homes;
- 7. RETURN ON INVESTMENT & EVALUATION. Children are helped most and the economy is made strongest when resources are allocated on the best evidence of what will lead to positive child outcomes.**
- a. Insist on adequate, efficient and shared financing mechanisms that minimize duplication of effort and identify priorities for public investment in times of budgetary constraints as well as a blueprint for future expansion.
 - b. Public and private funders should allocate resources (for children and for other purposes) based on rigorous evidence of effectiveness in improving outcomes whenever possible.