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November 18, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: David Peña

RE: STAFF BRIEF: NEW MEXICO PreK EXTERNAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

In 2005, Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC)-endorsed legislation was enacted to establish the *Pre-Kindergarten Act*, a voluntary program of pre-kindergarten services for four-year-old children offered by public schools, tribes or pueblos, Head Start centers, and licensed private providers. The New Mexico PreK program is administered jointly by the Public Education Department (PED) and the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD). The *Pre-Kindergarten Act* provides for a reimbursement process for pre-kindergarten service providers who receive reimbursement on a per-child basis and creates two non-reverting funds: the Public Pre-kindergarten Fund, administered by PED, and the Children, Youth and Families Pre-kindergarten Fund, administered by CYFD (See New Mexico PreK Costs).

As with K-3 Plus (See "Staff Brief: New Mexico K-3 Plus External Program Evaluation," November 18, 2009), this early childhood education program is also governed by statutes requiring that their efficacy be evaluated and the results reported each year to the Legislature and the Governor. This staff brief will include information about New Mexico PreK costs and the New Mexico PreK external evaluation.

New Mexico PreK External Program Evaluation

During the fall of 2005, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University was awarded a contract to conduct a "comprehensive program evaluation" of the New Mexico PreK program. The committee has received evaluation reports from NIEER during each of the three previous interims.

- During the 2006 interim, NIEER presented its first report. Based on the results of the evaluation and on other measures of classroom quality, NIEER concluded that, although New Mexico’s PreK program is still in the developmental stage with room for improvement, the state “has established a promising foundation for building its new PreK initiative.”
- During the 2007 interim, the second evaluation presented by NIEER found that New Mexico PreK has made a statistically significant and meaningful impact on children’s early language, literary, and mathematical development. More specifically, the evaluation found increases in:
 - children’s vocabulary equivalent to 54 percent more growth;
 - early math skills equivalent to 40 percent more growth; and
 - children’s print awareness, more than doubling growth over the year.
- During the 2008 interim, the evaluation focused on two dimensions of New Mexico PreK: the benefits to children in terms of language development, math skills, and literacy skills; and the overall quality of the PreK classrooms. On the first point, NIEER testified that New Mexico PreK had produced statistically significant gains in children’s vocabulary knowledge, math skills, and print awareness. Comparing the PED-administered programs with the CYFD-administered programs, NIEER found larger gains in vocabulary and early literacy among the children in the PED programs and a larger gain in math among the children in CYFD programs. However, based on the assessment instruments used, the evaluators found the overall classroom quality of New Mexico PreK programs to be limited or mediocre.

One issue that surfaced during the 2008 presentation is that the student identification (ID) number that PED issues to all New Mexico PreK students, whether the students are enrolled in a PED or CYFD-approved program, is among the New Mexico PreK data stored at the University of New Mexico and not included in the Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (STARS) at PED. According to staff from the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), the student ID, along with demographic information, is being captured in STARS in FY 10. The evaluation to be presented during the 2009 interim will be more comprehensive in that the evaluation assesses several years of data. This evaluation will also present information on the:

- context and research questions for the New Mexico PreK Evaluation;
- continuous improvement cycle;
- child impacts: language, math, literacy;
- classroom quality; and
- key findings and policy recommendation.

New Mexico PreK Costs

The *Pre-Kindergarten Act* creates two non-reverting funds: the Public Pre-kindergarten Fund; administered by PED, and the Children, Youth and Families Pre-kindergarten Fund; administered by CYFD. Both funds consist of appropriations to the fund, income from fund investments, gifts, grants, and donations. Up to 10 percent of the money in each fund may be used for administrative expenses by the respective department.

Since 2005, the Legislature has appropriated over approximately \$80.7 million to implement New Mexico PreK, including \$5.0 million in federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, and approximately \$14.5 million for classrooms:

- For FY 06, \$4.95 million:
 - \$4.0 million in a special General Fund appropriation to the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) to fund a voluntary pre-kindergarten program, which was equally divided between PED and CYFD; and
 - \$950,000 (after sanding) from the General Fund to DFA for pre-kindergarten services.

- For FY 07, approximately \$13.5 million:
 - \$3,995,800 from the General Fund to PED for pre-kindergarten programs in public schools;
 - \$1.5 million in a special General Fund appropriation to PED for “one-time pre-kindergarten start-up costs for developmentally appropriate equipment and classroom safety improvements” in public schools statewide;
 - \$4.0 million from severance tax bond (STB) proceeds to PED for pre-kindergarten classrooms in public schools statewide; and
 - \$3,995,800 to CYFD from the General Fund for pre-kindergarten programs administered by the department.

- For FY 08, \$17.0 million:
 - \$7.0 million from the General Fund to PED for pre-kindergarten programs in public schools. According to PED staff, \$500,000 was set aside for program start-up costs;
 - \$3.0 million from STB proceeds and the General Fund to PED for pre-kindergarten classrooms, including portable buildings, in public schools statewide; and
 - \$7.0 million from the General Fund to CYFD for pre-kindergarten programs administered by the department. According to CYFD staff, \$500,000 was set aside for program startup costs.

- For FY 09, over \$22.0 million:
 - \$8.5 million from the General Fund to PED for pre-kindergarten programs in public schools;
 - an additional \$1.0 million from federal TANF funds to PED for pre-kindergarten programs in public schools;
 - \$400,000 in a special General Fund appropriation to PED for pre-kindergarten start-up costs;
 - \$3.0 million from STB proceeds to PED for pre-kindergarten classrooms in public schools;
 - \$8.5 million from the General Fund to CYFD for pre-kindergarten programs administered by the department;

- an additional \$1.0 million from federal TANF funds to CYFD for pre-kindergarten programs administered by the department;
 - \$500,000 to CYFD from reauthorized STB proceeds for pre-kindergarten classrooms; and
 - \$200,000 to OEA “to evaluate the kindergarten-three-plus and pre-kindergarten programs.”
- More recently, for FY 10, approximately \$23.2 million:
 - approximately \$7.9 million (after appropriation reductions) from the General Fund to PED for pre-kindergarten programs in public schools;
 - an additional \$1.5 million from federal TANF funds to PED;
 - \$2.0 million from STB proceeds to PED for pre-kindergarten classrooms in public schools statewide;
 - approximately \$7.8 million (after appropriation reductions) from the General Fund to CYFD for pre-kindergarten programs administered by the department;
 - an additional \$1.5 million from federal TANF funds to CYFD; and
 - \$2.5 million from reauthorized STB proceeds to CYFD for pre-kindergarten classrooms.

According to PED, for FY 10, PED and CYFD together have approved 151 programs serving a total of 4,930 children statewide:

- PED has approved 61 programs serving 2,444 children in 29 school districts; and
- CYFD has approved 90 programs serving 2,486 children.

Presenters

Dr. Ellen Frede, Co-Director, NIEER, Rutgers University; and Dr. Jason T. Hustedt, Assistant Research Professor, NIEER, will present the evaluation report on the efficacy of New Mexico PreK: *Continued Impacts of New Mexico PreK on Children’s Readiness for Kindergarten: Results from the Third Year of Implementation* (September 2009).