



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

News advisory
3/11/04

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Governor Bill Richardson makes plans to expand Early childhood education

ALBUQUERQUE - Governor Bill Richardson announced a new effort today to expand access to early-childhood education opportunities for more New Mexico children. Governor Richardson will seek legislation in 2005 based on recommendations from his GPA Task Force.

Governor Richardson delivered the following remarks during a news conference today:

With full-day kindergarten in place, my administration is ready to shift gears and pursue a comprehensive effort to expand early-childhood education in every New Mexico community.

During dozens of town hall meetings last summer and fall, New Mexicans made it clear to me that they consider high-quality, early-childhood education as a critical part of education reform. I whole-heartedly agree.

It's imperative for pre-kindergarten children to be ready for school. It's equally important that public schools be ready for children when they begin kindergarten.

My GPA task force, led by the Lieutenant Governor, will get to work immediately on developing recommendations for a comprehensive early-childhood education program. I expect to make this a major policy issue for the 2005 legislative session.

In addition to the GPA task force, the Lieutenant Governor will work in conjunction with the Public Education Department, the Children, Youth & Families Department and the Children's Cabinet to develop recommendations.

Here's what I expect:

- One, we must increase access to optional, pre-kindergarten. There are innovative programs across the country that we can use as examples. The GPA and the Children's Cabinet are already studying these programs.
- Two, we will look at how best to build on the success of Head Start. Many low-income New Mexicans benefit from Head Start. And high-income families obviously have the resources to prepare their kids for school. We must do more to help working families that earn too much to qualify for Head Start, but still can't afford to send their kids to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs.

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