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Contact: Gilbert Gallegos
(505) 476-2217

Governor Bill Richardson Praises New Study Showing Success of New Mexico Pre Kindergarten

SANTA FE -- Governor Bill Richardson today praised a new study that shows substantial academic gains for children attending New Mexico's Pre K program. The study showed that the Pre K initiative had a meaningful impact on children's early language, literacy and mathematical development as they entered kindergarten.

"This is great news for the thousands of New Mexico families that now have the opportunity to send their children to quality Pre K programs," Governor Richardson said. "I encourage the Legislature to fully fund this program so we can continue to expand access to Pre K for every four-year-old."

The study, conducted by the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University, focused on randomly selected four-year-olds attending Pre K programs and randomly selected kindergarten students who previously attended Pre K programs. Additional studies will be conducted each fall to detail the estimated effects of the New Mexico Pre K initiative in the future.

The study showed that New Mexico's Pre K program:

1. Increased children's vocabulary scores of nearly 8 raw score points – 54 percent more growth over the year due to the program.
2. Increased children's math scores by about 2 raw score points – 40 percent more growth over the year due to the program.
3. Increased children's print awareness by nearly 26 percentage points – more than doubling growth over the year due to the program.

"I'm proud that the New Mexico Pre-K Initiative is helping our children succeed – and does so in a way that is voluntary and allows parents to choose the program that's right for their family," said Lt. Governor Diane Denish. "Because more than 80 percent of pre-K participants are Hispanics and Native Americans, this greatly increases their access to Early Childhood Learning and ensures that every child has brighter hopes for a diploma, a college education and a good job."

The NIEER study, which was required in the law that created the Pre K program, was paid for by the New Mexico Department of Finance and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Governor Richardson worked with the Legislature in 2005 to create the Pre K program, which is designed to eventually provide access to high quality pre-kindergarten to every family that wants it. About 1,500 four-year-olds had access to state-funded Pre K during the first school year, in 2005-06. The program was expanded to reach about 2,200 children during the 2006-07 school year.

The NIEER report is attached, and can be found at: www.nieer.org

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