

Early Childhood Success

Outcome:
Children Are Ready for School

Indicator:
% of 4 Year Olds Attending PreK or Head Start

Where Is Santa Fe Now?

- Similar to State****
- + Improved from Previous Year

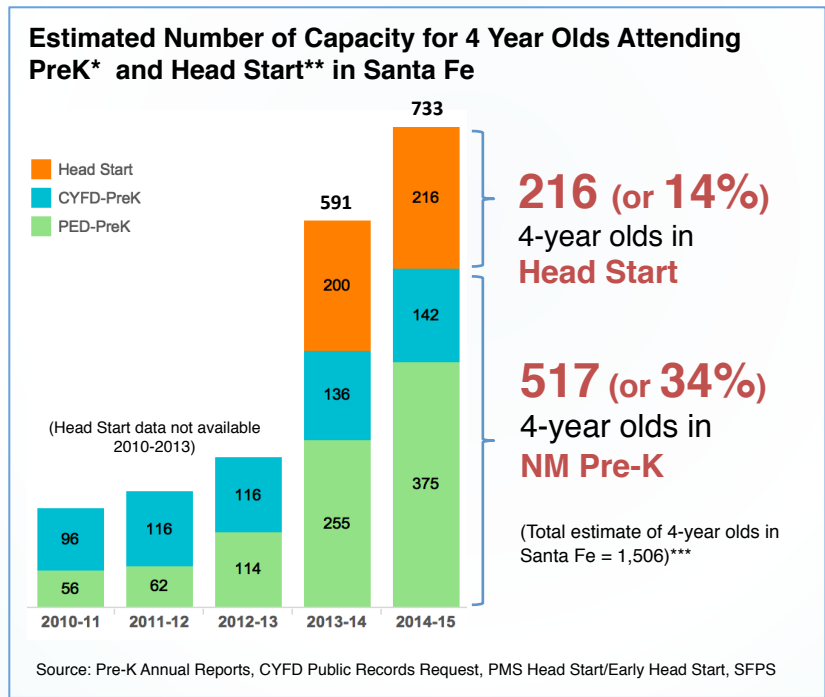
Why is this important?

According to a Pew Center report, “Children who attend high-quality PreK programs do better in school from the first day of kindergarten through their postsecondary years. Compared with peers who have not completed PreK, they have higher achievement test scores, they repeat grades far less often, they need less special education, they graduate from high school at substantially higher rates, and they are more likely to attend college.”

About NM PreK: NM PreK is a voluntary program created by the Pre-Kindergarten Act of 2005 to serve Title 1 (low-income) schools and child care, tribal and Head Start programs serving children in Title 1 attendance zones. It is jointly administered by the Public Education Department (PED) and the Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD).

About Head Start: Head Start is a federally-funded comprehensive early childhood education program for children living at or below Federal Poverty. In Santa Fe, the Head Start (ages 3-5) and Early Head Start (prenatal-age 3) program is provided by Presbyterian Medical Services.

How Are We Doing? Through rapid expansion in PreK capacity over the past few years, approximately half or 733 4-year olds are currently attending publicly-funded NM PreK or Head Start programs in Santa Fe.



PED-funded PreK program slots through Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS) more than tripled over the past two years contributing to increased rate of 4-year olds attending PreK and Head Start in Santa Fe. As of the 2014-2015 school year, 67% of the Title 1 designated SFPS elementary schools (12 out of 18; Total elementary schools = 22) provide PreK programs.

NM PreK and federal Head Start programs are publicly funded and are free to families. Being funded at rates far above most private child care, NM PreK Standards and Head Start Performance Standards are also more demanding than basic state child care licensing requirements. Free tuition and high standards make PreK and Head Start primary options for low income families looking for quality, affordable early childhood education.

Appendix 3. Increasing Access to Quality, Affordable Early Childhood Education and PreK

*PED PreK provided Elementary Schools, 2014-15: Atalaya, Camino Real, Cesar Chavez, Chaparral, Francis X Nava, Kearney, Nina Otero, Pinon, Sweeney, Tesuque, Turquoise Trail. **CYFD PreK Sites 2014-15:** Nambe Head Start, UWSFC Children’s Project, SFCC Kids Campus, TLC-The Learning Curve (new 2014-15)
****Head Start:** 7 sites around the County for 2013-14 and 2014-15: Flores del Sol, Nambe, Arroyo Seco, La Comunidad, Tierra Contenta, Ramirez Thomas, Sweeney.
*****Estimated # of 4 year olds 2013** from 0-4 census data, American Community Survey
 Note: In 2013-2014 School Year, approximately 27% of New Mexico and 29% of US 4-year olds attended Pre-K vs. 26% in Santa Fe. Additional 12.9% of NM and 10% of US 4-year olds attended Head Start programs.
 Data Source: NM PreK Annual Reports; PMS Head Start Data Request; National Institute for Early Education Research. Estimated NM cohort of 4-year olds = 28,000.

APPENDIX: Early Childhood Success

Appendix 3. Increasing access to quality, affordable early childhood education and PreK: what does it look like now?

Paying for Early Childhood Programs Birth-5

- **Public vs Private.** Child care/early learning programs are mostly provided by the private child care industry, minimally regulated by child care licensing standards via CYFD. Parents must pay for these services. Child care, especially infant care, in Santa Fe County, NM and nationally can be costly.
- **Child care assistance (subsidy or financial aid)** is available through federal and state funds for low-income working families, providing partial coverage of child care costs. Parents prove eligibility (under 150% FPL currently in NM) and select their choice of program that accepts subsidy.
- **Publicly-funded programs:** State PreK and federal Head Start provide free programs for eligible low-income families and follow stringent quality standards.

Barriers and Opportunities for Expanding PreK Enrollment

- **Extended Day PreK:** In 2014-15 the state began piloting an “extended day” of 5 to 7 hours for PreK, in addition to the ongoing 3-hour day program. Many families express problems with a 3-hour day due to full-day child care and transportation needs.
- **Early PreK for 3 year olds** is currently being piloted by CYFD.
- **Eligibility Criteria for PreK:** Current eligibility requirements make it impossible to serve ALL 4 year olds. State PreK legislation specifies Title 1 schools and surrounding communities; Head Start serves families at or below Federal Poverty Level. The legislature could potentially revisit its eligibility policies for PreK to allow universal PreK.

Article 23. 32A-23-5 “PreK services may be provided by public schools or eligible providers on a per-child reimbursement rate in communities with public elementary schools that are designated as Title 1 schools.”

- **Skilled early childhood workforce:** Current licensing requires only a 45-contact hour entry level course. Wages for child care teachers are near minimum wage with few benefits. The early childhood workforce needs to be professionalized via education and equitable pay. TEACH scholarships for college coursework and wages incentives, promoted by the NM Association for the Education of Young Children (NMAEYC), are critical supports that merit expansion.

Quality Indicators in PreK and Early Childhood Programs

- **PreK** uses the **NM Early Learning Guidelines** for Authentic Observation, Documentation and Curriculum Planning, along with Parent Conferences (3 times per year) to ensure child progress. PreK lead teachers must have or be working towards a Bachelor’s degree in early childhood, and Assistants an Associate degree. (Current state licensing requires only 45-contact hour entry level training)
- Rigorous federal **Head Start** Performance Standards encompass child development; child health, safety and nutrition; and family and community partnerships.
- Both PreK and Head Start require 1 teacher for every 10 4-year-old children (state licensing allows 20)
- In addition to PreK state standards and Head Start federal Performance Standards, New Mexico has a robust **Star Rating program** for child care/early learning programs. **5 Star Rating** is a tiered **Quality Rating Improvement System**- a way of measuring quality child care/early learning services and providing incentives to private child care businesses.

- Previously under AIM HIGH: **Star 2 = basic state licensing.** Stars 3, 4, 5 = program meets multiple quality indicators.
- A revised star rating system, **FOCUS**, with paramount “focus on children’s learning,” is being phased in to eventually replace AIM HIGH. FOCUS ratings indicate progressively higher achievement of quality standards in the areas of 1) Authentic child assessment and curriculum planning, 2) Safety and health promotion, 3) Family engagement, 4) Comprehensive program assessment and CQI, and 5) Early childhood educator qualifications.

Star Rating is an important guide to quality. However it is voluntary and is not yet universally implemented across the private child care market (except Star 2 basic licensing). Not all programs choose to participate, though parents may rely on Star rating in their search for high quality care. Based on Star rating, programs receive higher child care assistance (subsidy) rates from CYFD – to incent high quality programs to serve subsidized families, and to help programs afford to provide high quality services.

- **Accreditation** by CYFD-approved entities is an alternate path to 5 Star rating. Several Santa Fe County programs are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), arguably the highest quality designation possible.