

**NEW MEXICO EARLY LEARNING ADVISORY COUNCIL  
(ELAC)  
MEETING MINUTES  
September 4, 2014  
CNM Workforce Development Center – Albuquerque NM**

**Call to Order**

The Meeting was called to order by Erica Stubbs, Early Learning Advisory Council Chair. She welcomed the group and gave an opportunity to Council members and attendees to introduce themselves. Welcome and Introductions. She thanked CNM Workforce Development for the use of their space.

**Establish Quorum**

ELAC members in attendance: Andy Gomm, Barbara Tedrow, Rebecca Dow, Erica Stubbs, Dan Haggard, Karen Ziegler, JoLou Trujillo-Ottino, Ray Jaramillo, Franz Joachim and Heather Vaughn. Excused members: Elaine Gard, Ruth Kie, Larry Langley and Leighann Lenti. With ten members attending – quorum was established  
Meeting Minutes from June 5, 2014. Members reviewed the meeting minutes of June 5, 2014, and without additional comments, they moved to approve the meeting minutes.

MOTION TO APPROVE MEETING MINUTES FROM JUNE 5, 2014 ELAC MEETING: Larry Langley/Ray Jaramillo. ALL IN FAVOR, MOTION CARRIES  
(Public Comment Sign up Opens)

**Update: Race To The Top “Early Learning Challenge”**

Andy Gomm of the Department of Health told ELAC that federal officers were in New Mexico the week of Aug. 25 to monitor the state’s progress with Race to the Top. New Mexico received a \$25 million award in 2012 from Race to the Top, with an additional \$12.5 million awarded in 2013, for a total of \$37.5 million.

The grant’s goals are improving the infrastructure of early learning and development programs. “We aren’t likely to get this kind of money again in our lifetimes,” Gomm said.

The principal projects are:

- Development of the new FOCUS Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System for early learning programs,
- Establishment of investment zones by identifying and prioritizing communities where children are at risk.
- Support for early childhood educators with scholarships and training.
- Development and implementation of a new kindergarten readiness assessment.
- Creation of a system of unified early learning data across various agencies.

CYFD hired a project coordinator to oversee its Race to the Top efforts. That person, Jamie O’Malley, was introduced to ELAC. Last week was her first on the job. Previously, she had been an NM PreK classroom teacher with Discovery Child Development Centers in Las Cruces.

Andy Gomm and Dan Haggard of CYFD described progress in the various areas of the Race to the Top grant.

### FOCUS Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System

For the first two years of the grant, the state has worked on identifying the foundational elements of an early learning system that apply across child care, early intervention, home visiting, public school preschools of various kinds and NM PreK.

Two key elements are intentionality in teaching and intentionality in the leadership of the programs, he said. In addition, the full participation of each child is key – whether the child has certain religious, cultural, linguistic or disability characteristics. Programs need to engage all children and families.

Haggard said New Mexico is the ONLY state in the country to include home visiting under its Tiered Quality Improvement Rating System. “A lot of other states are watching what we are doing,” he said.

New Mexico will start piloting FOCUS in public school NM PreK sites and special education preschools and early intervention programs in January 2015, he said.

A new version of the NM Early Learning Guidelines has been developed and is posted on [newmexicokids.org](http://newmexicokids.org). It shows the 65 early learning indicators, and shows which of the indicators will be used in the new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

He said the state has held meetings around the state to gather input about the FOCUS criteria of quality, and New Mexico has employed an economist to do a cost analysis of FOCUS and the cost of quality for programs in meeting the standards.

Currently, 150 early care and education programs have been enrolled in the pilot FOCUS standards. “We are in the process of enrolling another cohort of 50 programs,” he said. “We in the process of enrolling 50 programs every six months.”

The star quality ratings under FOCUS determine the level of child care subsidy a child care program receives. New Mexico has had a tiered reimbursement system based on quality ratings for a number of years. FOCUS is making sure the ratings are measuring what is important for child outcomes.

Haggard said federal monitors visited the Children’s Promise Center in Albuquerque, owned by Rachel Davis. “She was very articulate and able to talk in depth about FOCUS TQRIS and the business of center-based child care,” he said. The monitors were very pleased with what they saw and said the visit was an important part of their stay.

Larry Langley, a business representative on ELAC, asked that the whole issue of private and faith-based child care centers be put on the agenda for ELAC's December meeting because the issues are complex and important. Chair Erica Stubbs agreed.

Haggard said that financing of quality is critical.

One effort the state is making is to offer planning grants to pay the cost of "floaters" or substitutes to free teachers for two or three hours a week of time to plan and reflect. These grants would be available to programs rated 3 STAR or above regardless of the number of children on subsidy.

Jo Lou Trujillo Ottino, of the NM Business Roundtable and an ELAC member, asked how much such grants would cost if available to all eligible programs.

"Astronomical," Haggard replied. He did not have an exact figure.

Rebecca Dow said people don't object to lower teacher-child ratios. But capacity is a problem. We don't want to displace families who need child care and the state can't give funds to private programs to expand, she said.

Haggard said the whole shift of moving from "child care" to "child care and education" is a huge transition for the field. "We have to figure out what the public responsibility is and the private responsibility," he said.

### Investment Zones

Another focus of the Race to the Top grant is Investment Zones, Andy Gomm reported. Alejandra Rebolledo-Rea, bureau chief of the Office of Child Development, has taken the lead in this area, he said.

Based on a number of social and economic indicators, the state has identified communities where children are at risk. Also considered were the number of high quality early learning programs available in the area.

Trainings have been held in these communities as part of the process of capacity building. In some cases, communities have not had an agency capable of applying for grants the state was offering to improve services. Early care and education programs in the Investment Zones have been selected to get enhanced support through consultation.

### Professional Development

T.E.A.C.H. scholarships have been expanded to include Family-Infant-Toddler (FIT) early intervention staff, home visiting practitioners, state consultants and others with Race to the Top funds, Gomm said. (T.E.A.C.H. for years has been available to early care and education teachers and directors.)

The funding has also supported higher education institutes on the state Early Learning Guidelines and FOCUS principles and curriculum.

Reflective practices have been incorporated into the professional development system, too.

### Kindergarten Entry Assessment

The state has contracted with West Ed to develop the new Kindergarten Entry Assessment which will be based on the observational assessment used in NM PreK. It will assess the children entering kindergarten in the areas of language, general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical development and social/emotional development. There will be field testing of the assessment this fall in half of the school districts.

By Fall 2015, 100 percent of school districts will be using the assessment, which is not a test but an observational tool a teacher uses to assess a child as he or she is going about normal classroom activities.

“It will be an authentic assessment just like you do in PreK,” Haggard said. “It is NOT a test. The Legislative Finance Committee was concerned about this. It is not a test like the DIBELS.” DIBELS are tests given in many school districts to determine level of language acquisition.

West Ed will do a validity assessment of the new tool over the next two years, he said.

### Unified Data System Across Agencies

Andy Gomm said another area of Race to the Top work is setting up data system that will be able to follow children through early childhood and grade school, so that the state can see what programs the child has participated in and what effect those programs have had.

“All confidential data will be protected and only aggregate reports will be available as the grant moves forward,” he said. The Legislature has wanted longitudinal data in order to look at investments in early childhood and see if they make a difference over time. Having each child who is involved with a state program assigned a unique identifier is part of the effort.

Gomm said CYFD has been building its own data system — EPICS — to coordinate the various programs that agency runs, and that multiyear project will collaborate with Race to the Top.

### **Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems**

Gloria Bonner, project director of Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS), said the grant has been around for more than 10 years. Its current project – focusing on developmental screening of children birth to 3 – started Aug. 1, 2013. The focus is on coordinating the expansion of developmental screening activities in early care and education program, she said.

Giovanna Rossi, ECSS contractor, said the project has gotten training materials to community programs on scoring Ages and Stages Questionnaires – parent developmental screening tools, which also include one on social-emotional development.

The project team has done an inventory of all the types of screenings used in New Mexico. “Everyone is doing screening differently,” she said. The process is far from standardized. It is not clear how many screenings of individual children are happening or how many referrals for further evaluation are made. “We are not there.”

“We found the level of public awareness of screening and child development itself is so low that we need to do more publicity,” Rossi said.

ECCS’s main objective is to increase the number of children getting a developmental screening, said Dr. Janis Gonzales, Family Health Bureau Medical Director.

ECCS plans to create a public awareness campaign, develop standards for screening and offer more trainings in the tools, increase the number of screenings conducted in early care and education settings, and create a new registry or reporting requirements to keep track of who is being screened.

“We want to work together (with ELAC) so we can align and not duplicate our efforts,” Bonner said.

Andy Gomm asked if ECSS was also making sure clinic settings were doing screenings. Dr. Gonzales said that UNM has a separate initiative focused on health care providers doing screenings, so ECSS focused on early care and education settings.

Karen Ziegler moved to have ECCS participate in the Access to Quality Early Childhood Services Subcommittee of ELAC. Larry Langley seconded the motion and all members were in favor.

Ray Jaramillo said he was embarrassed that he had not heard of ECCS and asked how he could connect with the project in Southern NM. Bonner said an Ages and Stages Questionnaire trainer was in Las Cruces two times in August and does go there frequently.

Andy Gomm suggested that Race to the Top funding could help prepare more screening trainers or do publicity about developmental milestones and screening, as well as collect data.

## **J. Paul Taylor Early Childhood Task Force**

The chair of the J. Paul Taylor Early Childhood Task Force offered a picture of what the task force is planning to recommend to the Legislature to prevent child abuse and improve services to families.

Task Force Chair Claudia Medina of the UNM Health Sciences Center pointed out that her task force was not duplicating ELAC’s broad efforts but focusing on preventing child abuse and neglect.

The J. Paul Taylor task force plans to give a detailed report to legislative committees in October, Medina said. The task force has been in existence since the legislature created it in

2013. “We may have to ask for another year,” she said. “Many details of the system (to prevent abuse) still need to be worked out.”

The main purpose of changes is to identify all pregnant women and young children at risk of being abused or neglected. “We wanted to do that using a screening tool that was universal,” and have it used in family clinics and early childhood centers to make sure all children are reached.

The task force wants to use a screening tool that considers poverty, housing issues, unemployment and so forth but also Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) of the parents that may show what parents need extra support. (The ACES study showing the connection between traumatic childhood experiences and later well-being in 17,000 people was done by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control.)

#### Community Health Workers

“If we find out, indeed, that a family is at risk because of environmental and emotional factors that indicate the family may need more support, we want to have Community Health Workers placed in every family health clinic in NM that could help.” The CHWs would serve as a bridge between clinics and services that might help a family.

The CHWs would all be connected to a hub in each community, responsible for training the CHWs and providing a place for them to collaborate. The hub would be represented on each of the county health councils, which already exist as a forum for early learning and health professionals and community leaders. The councils can identify policy issues that need to be addressed in each community.

Medina said home visiting is a powerful tool itself but there aren’t enough trained home visitors in New Mexico to provide services to families at risk.

Currently, clinics are using a variety of screening tools, and they need to be standardized into one, which includes ACES questions.

Karen Ziegler, the Head Start Collaboration Director and an ELAC member, asked if the task force is endorsing a particular model of home visiting. Medina said there is no particular model the task force is backing. “We want to find resources in New Mexico to grow our own best practices,” she said. “We always think New Mexico looks for best practices elsewhere.”

Barbara Tedrow, owner of early childhood centers in Farmington and a member of ELAC, noted that the Community Health Workers might look at collaborating with NM Communities of Care – established in 11 communities of NM to help with behavioral health concerns and children involved with juvenile justice. Medina said the task force is eager to collaborate with as many groups as possible.

Andy Gomm of the state Department of Health and an ELAC member said to do what the task force is proposing would take many Community Health Workers. He asked how many. If the state is moving toward investing in universal voluntary home visiting, maybe those professionals should be the ones connecting with at-risk families. (The state isn’t likely to invest in both home visiting and CHWs, he indicated, because of the cost.)

Medina said that coming from her background at the UNM Family Development Program, which had home visiting, by the time families get involved with home visiting it is often too late. “To even know home visiting is there, we need to have a trusted member of the community – a CHW – to be able to be the bridge between the primary care setting and those programs that have home visiting or provide other services to families.”

If a family doesn’t have food or doesn’t have affordable child care or doesn’t have a roof over their heads or doesn’t have work or know English, those issues will be much higher priority than learning better parenting through home visiting, Medina said. The family members will go to a trusted community member to get help navigating the system. She wasn’t sure how many CHWs were needed.

“We are at a crossroads.”

“We are at a crossroads,’ she said. “Our kids are being abused right and left. We need to do something even if it costs an arm and a leg.”

Larry Langley, a business representative on ELAC, congratulated the task force on the huge amount of work. His concerns, he said, is that “it sounds to me as if you are trying to create another agency... In business, we are trying to block adding another level of government... I would much rather resources go to direct services.

No new agency was ever mentioned at task force meetings, Medina said. “I believe the Department of Health and the Children, Youth and Families Department can play a tremendous role in this. Both agencies are represented on the task force.” She invited Langley to come to task force meetings.

“We will watch this as it progresses,” Langley said.

ELAC Chair Erica Stubbs asked Medina how ELAC could support or be aware of what the task force is doing. “Just be open to having these kinds of dialogues,” Medina said. “Also be open to sitting down with us when we get to the level of details.”

ELAC member Rebecca Dow, who has an early childhood program in Tor C, asked if the screening tool would be mandatory for parents. Medina said no. But she noted that Kaiser Permanente found that 98% of the 17,000 adults contacted in the ACES study did respond freely. One reason probably is that the ACES questions are not about a person’s current life but about his or her childhood.

## **NM PreK Report**

Public Education Department and Children, Youth and Families Department officials talked to ELAC about how the agencies collaborate so that they are not creating problems in certain communities by awarding contracts for serving a larger number of 4-year-olds than are in need of service.

Teams in each department review the applications made for NM PreK contracts and score them, based partly on need of the community. “We want to make sure there is not oversaturation in a community,” said Alejandra Rebolledo-Rea of CYFD.

She and Melinda Webster, Director of the Literacy and Early Childhood Bureau at PED, said the two agencies then get together to talk about their lists of proposed contract awards -- again to make sure contracts are going to programs in communities that have 4-year-olds in need of service.

They gave the examples of three communities to show how the agencies figure community need. In Gadsden School District, for instance, 1,074 children started kindergarten last fall. The state then looks at how many 4-year-olds are served in existing 4-Star and 5-Star early learning centers and by Head Starts. In this case, the number is 102. The state then looks at how many children are already being served by PED PreK and CYFD PreK programs -- 595 in this case. The total attending quality programs then is 697. Based on experience in other states, NM then figures 81% of the incoming kindergarten population would be served if enough program slots were available. That is 869 children -- OR 162 more than being served currently. Apparently, there is room for growth in NM PreK spaces in this community.

The other two examples given were for Española and for Farmington-Bloomfield-Aztec taken as a whole. In the case of Española, it appeared there is still need for 52 spaces for 4-year-olds to serve 80% of the 4-year-olds. In Farmington-Bloomfield-Aztec, it appeared there was need for 423 new spaces.

Barbara Tedrow, who owns early learning centers in Farmington, said she did not agree with "just looking at Star 4 and 5 centers." Most of the centers in the Farmington area are 3-Star, she said, and many are involved in FOCUS quality improvement. "There are Montessoris with BA teachers with 150 children not being counted (as quality programs for 4-year-olds)," she said. Thus, the need for more PreK spaces is exaggerated, she indicated.

Alejandra said the state will have to adapt its criteria in light of FOCUS.

Rebecca Dow asked if the state plans to apply for federal Preschool for All dollars, which could be used for 4-year-olds and free up state money to bolster the birth through age 3 system. She asked if the state has intentions of providing universal prekindergarten in public schools. "IF that is the direction we are going, we should be up front about it so that we can sustain birth through age 3 child care and education programs." Rebecca noted that public schools are building beautiful facilities for 4-year-olds.

Melinda Webster said the state has no plans to put NM PreK just in public schools and has no information about plans to apply for Preschool for All funds at this point. Preschool for All provides funding for four years, and that is one issue. If the state created new programs, it would need to find other sources of funding after four years.

Dan Haggard, CYFD's representative on ELAC, said, "Historically, public education is community based. Communities establish their priorities. I don't think enough can be said about developing relationships at the community level. . . . Make friends with the new superintendent of schools. Attend school board meetings."

He said everything he has heard from the current state administration is "very supportive" of a mixed delivery system for NM PreK in both public schools AND community programs, such as Head Start and private centers and homes.

Ray Jaramillo, director of Alpha School in Las Cruces and a member of ELAC, said that PreK is an amazing program and said some centers have given up serving infants and toddlers to set up PreK classrooms for 4-year-olds. The state is increasing infant-toddler reimbursement rates to try to encourage more care at those ages.

However, Ray said, 3-year-olds seem to be lost in the planning. "Where are 3-year-olds in this system?" He suggested planners need to be looking at ways to fund a multi-age NM PreK Program, including 3-year-olds. Erica Stubbs said the issue will be put on the next meeting agenda.

### **NM Early Care and Education Task Force**

Claire Dudley-Chavez of the NM Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP) reported about how the business group has been focusing on early childhood policy in NM, first by helping with the NM Early Care and Education Act in 2011 and then with the NM Home Visiting Accountability Act in 2013.

Currently, NMECDP convened the NM Early Care and Education Task Force in May to study policies that affect child care and education. It has been meeting monthly.

She presented a number of slides about the demographics of New Mexico, and noted that in child care the state needs to "maximize resources by supporting parents' work AND children's development and education simultaneously."

She talked about the importance of compensation for well educated teachers.

"My aunt was my teacher in the Albuquerque Preschool Co-Op," she said and was a great teacher. Her aunt went back to school, got her Master's and left teaching at the co-op. "That is always very real in my mind. How do we keep people like my aunt in early childhood?"

NMECDP has been involved in effort to do cost modeling to see what the cost of quality is in New Mexico.

The task force has a wide variety of members, including seven ELAC members. The meetings are facilitated by New Mexico First, and the business partnership itself has no agenda of its own that it is pushing. It is providing an opportunity for professionals to have a dialogue and decide what his needed.

The group does hope to draft legislation concerning child care and education for the 2015 legislative session. As the task force develops possible legislation, Dudley-Chavez said, she would be glad to bring those to ELAC for discussion. "We would welcome you to do that," said Chair Erica Stubbs.

### **Public Broadcasting System and children**

ELAC member Franz Joachim, general manager of KNME-TV, asked ELAC to support the request of the three public television stations in NM to get \$2.2 million in funding to replace distribution infrastructure that is too old.

The three stations – KNME-TV in Albuquerque, KENW in Portales and KRWG in Las Cruces – together reach 100% of NM’s population, he aid.

The stations provide 97 hours of high quality, age-appropriate educational children’s programming each week, he said. “Most of that programming is centered around early learning,” he said.

The stations also have events and activities that engage young people, such as the Ready To Learn initiative, a pilot summer reading program, the Super Why Reading Camps, the Electric Company’s summer and extended learning programs, and others.

ELAC agreed unanimously, with Joachim himself abstaining, to send letters to the governor, the speaker of the House and the president pro tem of the Senate saying ELAC strongly supports the PBS stations in recognition of their strong support of early care and education.

### **NM Head Start Association**

Amanda Gibson-Smith, president of the NM Head Start Association and director of Doña Ana County Head Start, invited ELAC members to attend the Region 6 Head Start convention in Albuquerque on Nov. 10-11.

She noted that Head Starts in the state want to work with state system to share data. “We have data and have had it for years and years,” she said.

“We know what we do is very worthwhile and we haven’t been able to share that because of the complexities of sharing data,” she said. CYFD is involved in the EPICS data system, as is Head Start, she said.

Another point she wanted to make was that it is important for the state and Head Starts to collaborate in the FOCUS TQRIS efforts.

Gibson-Smith’s program was one that was put up for re-competition because of low CLASS scores on student-teacher interactions. Doña Ana Head Start was awarded the grant again, but must participate in the state’s FOCUS TQRIS.

Currently, the FOCUS consultant for her program is the education specialist of the Head Start program who has many other arduous duties. “While we are getting outstanding support, it is not enough. We need more consultants. We are at the lowest priority now .... So, please send us help.”

She recommended that the council look at extending child care regulations to all NM PreK programs, including those in public schools.

She appreciated comments at the meeting by people concerned about balance in NM PreK awards so that there are not too many spaces allocated to a community. She said when Doña Ana Head Start did not know if it would continue, the program lost 15 of its children to an NM PreK program recruiting in her Head Start. Gibson-Smith asked for more collaboration among early childhood programs.

“There are more than enough kids for all of us to share without people stealing them,” she said.

Nationally, Head Start knows there is no need to compete for 4-year-olds, recognizing the need for service for children birth through 3, Gibson-Smith said.

Andy Gomm said PreK provides an opportunity for Head Start to serve more 3-year-olds. “We know we are not reaching all the children. We have trouble finding good programs for children aging out of our FIT system.”

Erica Stubbs said Head Starts have to change their teacher-child ratios to serve younger children, and she said programs looking at that as a possibility.

### **Public Comment**

**Trish Nickerson**, director of Cottonwood Montessori in Corrales, said her school has 200 children from 18 months old to 12 years old. She is part of NM Montessori Network, a newly formed task force that wants to speak up for Montessori educators.

Under new FOCUS criteria, Montessori teacher credentials are not recognized, she said, even though they are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Teachers put in a lot of work to get Montessori certified, she said.

Andy Gomm asked how many Montessori programs there are in the state. Nickerson said there are 16 in Albuquerque and 24 in the state.

Nickerson said she wanted to make sure there is inclusion of different philosophies and methods in early childhood and not one “cookie-cutter plan or warehousing of children.”

Even teachers with Master’s Degrees in Montessori must complete FOCUS trainings, she said. “It is disheartening.” She said Montessori educators know they are meeting quality criteria and just want an opportunity to show how it looks in their programs, which may be different.

Ray Jaramillo said it is “great to hear another voice.” He asked how the state could be better at collaborating with people who have different perspectives. “We just have a different point of view but with the same end goal.”

**Joan Baker**, lead organizer for the Quality Early Learning Association, said she was concerned about the Montessori issues too.

She also said that “As NM has moved into making parents apply for child support to get child care assistance benefits, other states have moved away from that.” She said even parents who have restraining orders against the fathers are being required to seek support.

“I’d like to see access happen for the parents.” When people are only focusing on rates, rates may go up but access goes down. FOCUS is a step in the right direction, she said, but one of biggest issues is funding and teacher retention. The proposed constitutional amendment would recognize birth through age 5 programs as education and eligible for public education funding.

Ray Jaramillo said the child care task force is discussing policy changes such as giving child care assistance contracts for a year's term whether a parent is working full-time or going to school full-time during the whole year or not.

**Deborah Lane** of Sandia Montessori School said she is a "voice for teachers." Education can go a long way but there are "older people who don't have a degree but they have passion and they can teach children.... We're ousting older people. They are intimidated about getting a degree."

She does have a Montessori degree now herself. "Am I not worthy now?" She said Montessori teachers are "so important for our children and students."

**Victoria Romano**, owner and director of Sandia Montessori, said "I am passionate about Montessori certifications and teaching. I think those should be recognized."

As a director, she said, she now must take early childhood courses. Barbara Tedrow, owner of centers in Farmington, said she is in same position that even with a National Administrators Credential and a Bachelor's Degree in human resources, she does not qualify as a director. So she shifted to being just the owner.

"People should be grandfathered in if they've done the work for years," said Romano.

**Erica Candelaria** of Special Quest, who works for Parents Reaching Out, said the group had requested that there be a parent member of ELAC. Two parents have applied for a vacancy in a member-at-large position on ELAC, she said.

"Part of being inclusive is how we use language," she said. "IF we could change how the community feels about people with disabilities, part of it could be changing the word 'handicapped' to 'accessibility.'"

**Wendy Sager Evanson** of Truth or Consequences said she talked about how she learned about rural poverty by moving to TorC from New Haven, Conn. She has been health council coordinator and is active on the board of the Infant Mental Health Association. "There is amazing disconnect and lack of information about child development," she said. She noted there is a huge epidemic of maternal depression as well. She asked how we can have more empowered, educated parents.

Rebecca Dow praised Evanson for the work she does getting mothers together and celebrating parents in Tor C.

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 4, 2014.

Meeting Adjourned

MOTION TO ADJOURN ELAC MEETING: Karen Ziegler/ Franz Joachim. ALL IN FAVOR,  
MOTION CARRIES