

Gallup Herald
Gallup, NM
Circ. 3300
From Page:
a13
12/13/2010
360690



Report: New Mexicans favor statewide programs that support young children

STAFF REPORT

The Gallup Herald

ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexicans overwhelmingly agree that universal access to pre-k for all 4-year-olds should be a state priority. That is one of the main conclusions of a report released by Viewpoint Learning, Inc., as part of its Common Ground project. The report, “The First Five Years: Choice-Dialogues on Early Childhood in New Mexico,” tracks the results of five 8-hour focus groups recently conducted in New Mexico Communities (Albuquerque, Española, Farmington, Laguna Pueblo, and Las Cruces).

“Participants of the day-long dialogues were surprised by the extent of the challenges young children and their families face and the limited state investment in early childhood,” said Heidi Gantwerk, Vice President of Viewpoint Learning. “Across the board they wanted to see policies that focused on supporting all New Mexico families, not just those most in need.

“What’s even more telling is the sense of urgency people had in addressing the issue, and that all five locations agreed that doing nothing was not an option,” she added.

The five Choice-Dialogues were conducted over the summer with diverse groups of about 40 participants each. The groups all used the same workbook, which laid out several scenarios for improving outcomes for New Mexico’s kids as well as options for funding. Participants could select one scenario, combine different components to create a new scenario, or come up with something completely differ-

ent. Several funding options were provided—as well as the option to do nothing—and included arguments both for and against each option as well as estimates on how much money each would raise.

The Viewpoint process included a one-day Strategic Dialogue in Albuquerque with key leaders from the business community, public sector, and several elected officials. The Strategic Dialogue was co-convened by the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP), NM Business Roundtable for Educational Excellence, and Center for Philanthropic Partnerships. Their work helped frame the workbook that was used for the Choice-Dialogues conducted with the five communities across the state.

Gantwerk and Isabella Furth, also of Viewpoint Learning, will both be in Albuquerque later this week to present the report findings at the statewide convening, “Transforming Education: From Birth to Success.”

The Viewpoint Choice-Dialogues are part of the statewide Our Voices, Our Children effort and were funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which is also supporting the convening. New Mexico Voices for Children is hosting the convening, which will include several organizations, including the NMECDP, which will present findings of a poll of business and legislative leaders they commissioned; the UNM Family Development Program, which is working with local communities on a process with Everyday Democracy; and several other local partners.

County:

McKinley

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