



PRESS RELEASE

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State Would Save More Than \$1 Billion with Pre-K Investment New study: Quality early childhood education cuts down on future crime costs

ALBUQUERQUE—A study released today by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) shows that participation in a high-quality pre-kindergarten program provides a child – and society at large – with life-long social and economic benefits. "Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation" states that children who receive early child education are less likely to repeat a grade or require special education or child welfare services. They are less likely throughout their lifespan to engage in criminal activity and as adults they earn higher incomes.

The study projects that by the year 2050, New Mexico would save more than \$1 billion from reduced crime if it implemented a universal pre-k program for all 3- and 4-year-olds now. And we'd see more than \$2 billion more in increased wages and benefits.

"The study reinforces what we've been saying for years," said Bill Jordan, policy director for New Mexico Voices for Children. "The benefits of early childhood education are many and well worth the investment. Science tells us that more than 85 percent of brain development occurs in the first few years of life," he added, "and yet less than one-half of one percent of our state budget is spent on these early years.

"By contrast, over 60 percent of the state budget is spent on K-12 and higher education. One of the reasons our children fail to reach their full potential is that we've failed to invest in them when it is most crucial."

Jordan likens the brain development that occurs in early childhood to the frame and foundation of a building – it is the structure upon which all future learning and development is built. But unlike a building foundation, which can be shored up later, that brain development can only occur in the first few years of life. A missed opportunity for developing this critical structure can never be recovered.

The study points out that pre-K is one of the only public programs that pays for itself in the long run and it advocates for a national pre-K program as a way to strengthen the U.S. economy by raising incomes, improving worker skills, and reducing poverty.

"High quality early childhood education isn't just the right thing to do for our children – it's the right investment for our state and our country," Jordan added.

The study, written by well-known economist Robert Lynch, is available here:

http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/book_enriching

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.

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