

OurVoices | OurChildren  
Common Ground Initiative

## 2011-2012 Update

Viewpoint Learning and New Mexico Voices for Children worked with local partners around the state to engage leaders in dialogue around improving early childhood outcomes.

- 10 meetings: Albuquerque, Española, Las Cruces, Farmington and Laguna Pueblo
- 250+ highly diverse participants from Early Childhood, Business, Education, Health, Social Service, Government, Parents and Civic organizations
- Participants learned about the state of Early Childhood in New Mexico today and the results of Viewpoint Learning's Choice-Dialogues with New Mexican participants in 2010.
  - Found common ground about what issues need to be addressed locally and across NM
  - Developed in-depth dialogue skills and planned dialogue-based initiatives to improve outcomes for all of the youngest New Mexicans.

### The participants agreed on key challenges:

- Inconsistent and inadequate funding
- Poverty and the economy: breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, lack of good jobs
- Lack of public knowledge about the critical importance of early childhood development
- Continuing cultural, racial and generational divides
- Lack of collaboration among agencies and providers, on both the state and local level
- Lack of dialogue between early childhood community and business, political community

### And important opportunities:

- Common ground around providing support for children: the well being of kids is “a non-partisan issue”
- Parents are a constituency that want the best for their kids and can be mobilized
- Businesses can be enlisted through dialogue to support EC efforts in their communities (especially when they understand the long-term benefits)
- New Mexico has strong communities with rich traditions: tapping into this sense of community could be a critical piece of improving early childhood outcomes
- Important early childhood resources are already in place

In each community, groups designed dialogue-based initiatives to improve outcomes for early childhood, and seed grant funding was provided to make sure these initiatives move forward. Brief summaries of these initiatives are below (all names are tentative):

### **Albuquerque:**

1. **Padres Dialogando Por Los Niños** (Parents Engaging in Dialogues for Children): Parent education and engagement in advocating for children and improving EDD. The parent advocates from the dialogue would spearhead a bi-lingual effort to bring in more parents and engage them directly in dialogue with teachers legislators, business leaders and elected officials. The goal is to work towards increased funding/resources educate the public about the importance of early childhood development, increase communication and collaboration for the improvement of EC outcomes.

2. **Building Cross-Cultural Respect through Early Childhood Programs:** A diverse group of EC stakeholders will develop a series of “field trips” to EC sites, followed by structured conversations between EC providers, advocates and school superintendents, teachers, the local school board, legislators, parents, principals/administrators, and directors. The goal is to overcome some of the barriers parents face due to language, stereotyping, poverty and language difficulties. The group hopes to bring the EC community and the K-12 community together to learn more about one another and work towards several key advocacy goals identified by all participants, including increased resources for EC programs.

### **Las Cruces**

**Honoring and Engaging Families in their Home:** A broad collaborative of EC stakeholders from Doña Ana county will define elements of a home visiting model that honors the needs of family and community. The committee will review current models, training and curricula, and identify strengths and weaknesses as well as community-based indicators that align between agencies. The collaborative would do asset mapping throughout the county, and also develop partnerships with local colleges and community colleges to improve the training and education of EC providers and those doing home visits.

### **Laguna Pueblo:**

- 1) **Laguna Children and Families:** Develop a community-based vision of EC in Laguna, engaging tribal leaders, EC advocates, fatherhood council, parents and families to create a vision for early childhood that informs the development and implementation of programs for children and families on the Pueblo, and informs (and expedites) the construction of a new EC facility.
- 2) **NM Native American Early Childhood Outreach Initiative:** The participants in the Laguna session will initiate a cross-pueblo dialogue, mapping out all EC activities, sharing best practices and identifying critical issues for joint advocacy. In particular the group will focus on raising funds for EC programs on the Pueblos and in raising awareness among the Native population of the importance of ECD and the benefit of high quality programs for young children and families.

### **Farmington:**

**Early Childhood Development Coalition for San Juan County:** A broad coalition made up of EC stakeholders, educators, library staff and others in San Juan county will function through San Juan County Safe Communities Initiative “Strengthening Families.” The group provides outreach to the community at conferences, at library and EC organizations, reaches out to business community and elected officials to engage them in identifying shared priorities and promoting legislative change to benefit ECD.

### **Española:**

**Early Childhood Action Network of Rio Arriba:** Create a broad network of EC stakeholders, including providers, inter-faith groups, educators, parents, local non-profits and participants from the Capacity Building and Interactive Briefings. Meeting monthly, the group will focus on documenting outcomes and best practices of EC organizations in the county, and will create a strategic plan for improving outcomes. Overall the network will focus on prevention rather than crisis management. The group plans a kick-off event this spring.