



Early Childhood Development

Community Meetings

FINAL REPORT

- Taos, October 18
- Farmington, October 20
- Las Cruces, November 1

CONVENERS

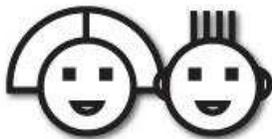
New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership
New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department
New Mexico Business Roundtable

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ORGANIZER

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new mexico **early childhood development** partnership



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INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the Early Childhood Care and Education Act was signed into law to establish an early childhood system across the state and support quality programs for our state's youngest children. New Mexico's young people are our greatest asset. High quality early childhood care and education is vital to ensuring all New Mexico's children can enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed. Achievement of this goal will substantially influence the success of our youngest children and reap the economic success this will bring to our state. We now know that 85% of the brain develops before the fifth year of life. We also know the economic burden that every New Mexico taxpayer bears because of inadequate preparation of more than a third of New Mexico's pre-school age children.

The focus of the *Early Childhood Development Community Meetings* was to outline the importance of public-private partnerships in fulfilling the promise of the act and to share ideas about regional and local issues that affect our youngest children and their families.

It is important that parents, early childhood providers, civic leaders, business people, and policymakers share their ideas about how this act can meet the needs in their communities and provide opportunities for our state's greatest asset for the future—our young people.

Key Outcomes

Participants from the communities of Farmington, Las Cruces, and Taos attended the *Early Childhood Development Community Meetings* held in October-November, 2011.¹ These participants saw the need for a commitment to the holistic needs of children and families that is community-based, culturally competent, and championed by leaders from all sectors of the community. They proposed ideas regarding ways to:

- Provide support to families of young children
- Encourage involvement of local businesses and business leaders in early childhood care and education issues
- Identify, recruit, and retain qualified and inspired caregivers and teachers for our youngest children
- Improve collaboration among initiatives and programs that support New Mexico families with young children

These community-based ideas will strengthen the statewide plan to ensure a comprehensive early childhood care and education system in New Mexico.

This report summarizes the results of three community meetings. The results will be submitted to the Early Childhood Care and Education Implementation Team and the Early Childhood Learning Advisory Council and will inform their plans to establish an aligned early childhood system across the state. The 102 community members who participated in the meetings represented business, early childhood providers and advocates, education, healthcare, government and legislative staff, and elected officials.

¹ One additional community meeting will be held in Clovis in January 2012. The results of this meeting will be incorporated into this report at that time.

Conveners

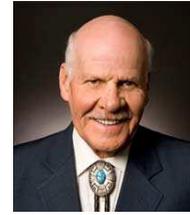
State legislators from around the state joined the **New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership, New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department** and **New Mexico Business Roundtable** to host the community meetings.



Senator Carlos Cisneros
Taos



Senator Stephen Fischmann
Las Cruces



Senator Clinton Harden, Jr.
Clovis



Senator Cynthia Nava
Las Cruces



Representative Thomas Taylor
Farmington



Representative Ray Begaye
Farmington

The **New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP)** is a public-private partnership founded to advocate for the creation, adoption, and implementation of robust, effective, and proven early childhood programs that are available to all children, birth to five in New Mexico. The Partnership 's mission is to create statewide awareness, support, and understanding of the overwhelming benefits of early childhood development programs, and the positive effect on future generations of New Mexicans.

The **New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department (NMCYFD)** provides an array of prevention, intervention, rehabilitative, and after-care services to New Mexico children and their families. The department partners with communities to strengthen families in New Mexico to be productive and self-sufficient. The organization respectfully serves and supports children and families and supervises youth in a responsive, community-based system of care that is client-centered, family-focused, and culturally competent.

The **New Mexico Business Roundtable** was founded on the belief that businesses should play an active and effective role in the formation of public policy in the areas of education and economic growth. The organization is a statewide association of executives from leading companies, small business owners, executives of trade organizations, and foundations that believe effectiveness is rooted in the direct, personal participation of its investors, who present government with reasoned alternatives and positive policy suggestions.

Organizer

The meetings were organized by **New Mexico First** an organization that engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, the public policy organization offers unique town halls and forums that bring together people from all walks of life to develop their best ideas for policymakers and the public. New Mexico First also produces nonpartisan public policy reports on critical issues facing the state. These reports – on topics like water, education, healthcare, the economy, and energy – are available at www.nmfirst.org.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION RESULTS

During the meetings, participants benefited from hearing a keynote presentation from a local early childhood care and education expert who outlined the key issues that young children and their families face in the community and the surrounding area. They also had the opportunity to review statewide information that shows where communities are facing the most risks, where programs are currently operating, the quality of these programs, and where there are gaps that need to be filled. This information can help the state make financial and other policy decisions to support young children, families, and communities in a systematic and effective way.

Participants also engaged in small group discussions in which they answered four key questions. These questions were drawn from previous research done by NMECDP and other nonprofit organizations that have been canvassing the state in the past two years. The questions address four issues that still seem to be key to aligning an early childhood system across the state:

- In our community, what are practical ways of providing support to families of young children?
- How can we more directly include and encourage involvement of our local businesses and business leaders in early childhood care and education issues?
- Within our community, what are ideas for identifying, recruiting, and retaining qualified and inspired caregivers and teachers for our youngest children?
- What can be done in this region to improve collaboration among initiatives and programs that support New Mexico families with young children?

The following outlines the results of the participants' conversations, both the similarities among the communities and the differences.

Supported Families

The participants emphasized the need to respect each parent's role and knowledge of their children and to remember that all parents care and want their children to be successful. However, in a complex society, some parents need support in fulfilling their role. Sometimes, the community needs to step in and provide support for families.

Members in each community acknowledged what one community called "adverse childhood experiences²" as very relevant challenges to the lives of young children and their families. These experiences include recurrent physical or emotional abuse, chronic substance abuse, someone in the household who is incarcerated for extended periods, access to affordable housing and transportation, etc. Community members from the law enforcement and judicial system, as well as early childhood providers, stressed the need to look at adolescent and adult indicators such as relationships between siblings, those in a high school or not, high school graduation rates, college graduation rates, gang crime, unemployment, etc. and how these conditions influence the needs of young children and their families. The chronic nature of some of these indicators is another reason why a family support system, broader than just early childhood development, is so important to communities. One child care center can't fix or respond to the needs of children who grow up in an environment with chronic stressors.

² The Taos community uses the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study <http://www.acestudy.org/> as one resource to guide their early childhood care and education planning.

Community members agreed that young children and their families need services that address a host of needs in their lives. Communities can best support families by using a holistic approach and combining mental/behavioral/physical health and wellness programs with child care and education programs. The programs need to respond to the needs of adults as well as their children. The challenge is maintaining funding that will allow successful programs to expand and serve more families (e.g., home visiting, behavioral health, pre-school beyond special education) or allow the establishment of programs that serve unmet needs (e.g., marriage skills education, child crisis centers, transportation to access services). Affordable, as well as free, programs are needed in communities.

In addition to the state-sponsored programs of Early Head Start, Head Start, and Early Intervention, other successful programs and services mentioned include:

Cross-cutting Services

- The Home Visiting Program is provided statewide through NMCYFD to parents, prenatally and with children birth to age three, to enhance the child-parent relationship, create home environments that positively impact their child's social and emotional development, and provide information and referrals to community resources.
- The First Born Program is a home visiting program offered to women pregnant for the first time and first-time families. It provides a comprehensive set of topics that families learn as well as specific tools, activities, and educational materials that can be adapted to each family's needs in many northern New Mexico counties and Grant County.
- The Paso a Paso Network bridges the gap between health, education, and social service organizations in Taos and the surrounding areas and trains parents to be advocates for their children.
- Promotoras are community health leaders who assist Latina women in Las Cruces share health information and develop leadership skills.
- IREACH is a non-profit organization that provides quality home and community-based services centered around the needs of people with disabilities in Las Cruces.
- NonviolenceWorks, Inc. is a Taos nonprofit organization that provides mentors to fatherless children and helps men become better fathers and husbands through nonviolence.
- The Weed and Seed Program is in many New Mexico communities and is sponsored by the US Department of Justice as a collaboration of law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in "weeding out" criminals who participate in violent crime and drug abuse; attempting to prevent their return to the targeted area; and "seeding" to bring human services to the area, encompassing prevention, intervention, treatment, and neighborhood revitalization using community-orientated policing.

Health Services

- Healthy Start is a free health insurance program for pregnant, uninsured, low-income women that offers early prenatal care, two months of postpartum care, family planning services, counseling, and referrals.
- The Children's Health Program is a no-cost or low-cost Medicaid/CHIP program which provides health coverage for children for routine check-ups, immunizations, dental care, doctor visits, prescription medications, and hospital care.
- Casa de Corazon provides mental health services in Taos and Espanola.
- The Full Engagement Training program teaches nutrition, exercise, and energy management. It is currently offered by the San Juan Regional Medical Center.
- Health Councils in many communities provide mother-child health and breast feeding counseling during home visiting.
- Teen pregnancy prevention is a statewide, volunteer-based program provided by the NM Department of Health and focuses on the responsibility of young men.
- Somos Familia is an emergency shelter in Las Vegas.

- Passport for Health is an online service that provides a confidential repository for health, emergency contact, and other key information for families and health practitioners that is available 24/7.
- Health Provider Directories are distributed to residents in many communities.

Education Programs

- The GRADS Program is a high school-based program for pregnant students in Las Cruces.
- Childbirth programs are offered in some communities.
- READY! for Kindergarten teaches parents how to talk, sing, read, and play with children in simple ways that foster essential pre-literacy, pre-math, and social-emotional skills.
- The Parents as Teachers Program teaches parenting skills, life skills, and financial literacy skills.
- Public libraries in Farmington and Las Cruces, offer reading readiness programs for children, parents, and early childhood providers and reach children who are not enrolled in formal early childhood programs (e.g., Every Child Reads, Books for Babies, Children's Reading Foundation, etc.)
- PASSport to Success is a training program developed for parents to help their children develop a positive attitude toward learning and create a productive home learning environment.
- The Strengthening Families Through Early Care and Education Initiative is an approach to preventing child abuse and neglect by supporting families through childcare programs developed by the The Center for the Study of Social Policy.
- The Juvenile Diversion Program provides young offenders with a positive alternative to the court system by participating in structured activities intended to improve their understanding of the legal system and law enforcement, increase their self esteem, teach better methods of communication, and improve decision making skills.

All communities saw the need to educate community members regarding early childhood issues and conduct outreach to families. Identifying points of contact within communities and collaborating among existing services seem to be the key to outreach. Public schools, healthcare clinics, healthcare providers/promodoras, libraries, faith-based organizations, tribal chapter houses, childcare and recreation centers, civic and nonprofit organizations, and frequently visited businesses like grocery stores were mentioned as valuable points of contact for community members.

One challenge is to create a referral system that is aligned with these natural points of contact or is a one-stop Parent Resource Center that can connect families to services and support. This referral system must also be parent-friendly, cultural competent, and use supportive language (i.e., first time parent rather than teen parent).

Another challenge is reaching hard to reach parents. A public awareness campaign was mentioned as a valuable tool using all forms of public communication such as social networking, newspapers, billboards, and media. The need to have one voice/one message to illustrate the importance of parent engagement in the lives of their children was also mentioned. One community suggested looking at the ideas documented by the Framework Institute (www.frameworkinstitute.org) an organization that seeks to advance public conversations about social problems.

Two communities, Taos and Farmington, saw the need to focus on education opportunities and economic development to ensure higher paying jobs are available for parents. An increased focus on vocational programs that fit the interests of the region, financial support for higher education, job training and assistance in successfully applying for jobs, and financial literacy were seen as important needs.

Farmington and Las Cruces expressed the importance of supporting families in their native language as well as understanding community members' culture and systems in order to ensure trust and more in-depth knowledge of the barriers families face. One community suggested using the Funds of Knowledge (www.learnnc.org) approach which incorporates the cultural and cognitive resources of parents.

Involved Businesses

Those who live and work with children each day realize that investing in early childhood development can pay huge dividends. Participants stressed the need to involve all sectors of the community, both public and private, in making the success of children a priority.

Members in each community saw the need to educate business leaders regarding the relevance of early childhood issues to the economic well being of the community. Community members acknowledged that better communication is needed regarding the importance of these issues and the outcomes for businesses. Sharing data supporting the return on investment in early childhood development would be helpful. Partnering with local Chambers of Commerce and Community Colleges to sponsor round table discussions and community dialogues could also be helpful. Establishing a local NM Business Roundtable chapter was also suggested.

Community members acknowledged the key was conducting effective outreach to a diverse group of business leaders within the community. Identifying a convener or convening group willing to bring key influencers together was seen as an important first step. Natural leaders or groups mentioned include local councils of government or elected officials, the Chamber of Commerce, and civic groups such as the Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs. Leaders should be drawn from a community's largest employers (e.g., banks, hospitals, schools) and small businesses. Law enforcement, church leaders, and early childhood small businesses should also be engaged. Integrating discussions of early childhood issues into scheduled business meetings at the chamber and at civic group meetings was suggested. One community suggested that meeting invitations could come from young children themselves.

All communities suggested ways businesses could directly support early childhood development issues. Ideas mentioned include:

- Allow employees time to volunteer in early childhood programs such as child care centers, immunization programs, etc.
- Conduct education programs or brown bag lunch seminars for employees (e.g., family budgeting, healthy living, parent mentoring)
- Offer scholarships to sponsor children for child care services
- Offer employee incentives to help employees with child care expenses
- Provide on-site child care services
- Directly fund successful, community-based early childhood care and education programs and services

Farmington and Las Cruces suggested that businesses institute family-friendly practices for their employees as a way of supporting early childhood needs. Ideas include:

- Releasing parents from work to participant in important child-related activities
- Allowing flex schedules
- Allowing personal days for child care emergencies
- Providing a menu of employee benefits, including child care support options, and allowing employees to choose those benefits most important to them

Quality Child Care Workforce

Dedicated and inspired early childhood professionals know that working with children in quality settings can support their success and development into adulthood. Recruiting a local workforce and developing their skills and loyalty to the field is an important community asset for families and businesses.

Each community recognized the need to provide multiple education choices in order to support those who want to explore the early childhood development field and enter the early childhood workforce. One way to encourage young adults to engage in the field is to partner with local colleges and universities to establish an early childhood development career pathway in high schools and provide the opportunity to earn dual credit for coursework. In addition, child care centers could provide service learning opportunities and internships for students. Another need is flexible course scheduling for those who want to pursue a career while working or raising a family (e.g., evening classes, distance learning programs, online courses, etc.). Creating opportunities for parents to become providers by offering on-the-job training and mentoring was also mentioned as a strategy.

The primary challenges to recruiting a qualified workforce include the low high school graduation rate and the time it takes to finish a degree program. Pueblos are challenged in hiring qualified native teachers. Some native communities are recruiting and working with senior citizens and foster grandparents to expand their early childhood workforce.

Members in each community also recognized the need to provide funding support for education in early childhood development. The most frequently mentioned suggestions for community action include degree scholarships, tuition reimbursement, education loan forgiveness for service, TEACH program expansion, and government funding support for mandated staff certification requirements.

Each community also believed the greatest barrier to retaining a qualified early childhood workforce was the level of wages and benefits offered. Many members suggested creating wage or benefit incentives for quality, continued professional development, and tenure. A suggestion from one community was to pay more for teachers in kindergarten and lower elementary school grades.

Providing community recognition for early childhood providers was mentioned in Farmington and Las Cruces as a recruiting and retention strategy. Community members believed that early childhood caregivers and providers should be held in high regard and recognized in their communities for the critical role they play.

Farmington and Las Cruces also suggested that more professional development was needed for those in the early childhood development field. Key topics include cultural competence, leadership and administration, and early intervention.

Community members in Taos recommended that state regulations for opening and operating a childcare center should be reviewed and streamlined. This action could lead to more available centers and shorter waiting lists for admission. Reimbursement policy was also seen as an obstacle.

Collaborative Efforts

Participants viewed making young children a community priority as a practical step to achieving community goals for education, economic development, and overall quality of life. This focus, however, would take collaborative effort in order to have maximum impact.

All communities believed that key stakeholders needed to be engaged in this effort over an extended period of time. Each community had experienced the challenge of sustaining group collaborations. They saw the need to recruit a champion or group of champions who consistently and persistently convene meetings to inform, educate, and ultimately engage a diverse group of community members who would make a commitment to having collective impact. This meant getting to know community members, relating to their sense of

responsibility, and be willing to keep the conversation going until action plans could be agreed to. The communities saw the need to think and act with a system's orientation (i.e., taking into consideration all aspects of the issue—family environment, health, education, law enforcement, workforce and economic development, etc.) rather than operate in individual silos. They saw collective action as a much more efficient and effective use of funds and resources.

Creating public-private partnerships or networks was seen as the best approach to collaborative action. These networks would need to include a broad spectrum of expertise: parents, healthcare professionals, educators at all levels, business leaders, community funders, and city/county elected officials. To encourage a think-tank approach, they suggested bringing in specialists at the local and state level when needed.

Each community also saw the need to continuously review and communicate relevant local data regarding the issues. Understanding data at the community or county level (e.g., needs, gaps, program evaluations, return on investment) would help focus collective effort. Continuous learning from the review of best practices in other communities and states³ would help inform decisions and actions. Promoting a unified message that shows the community cares about children and families can leverage the decisions and actions of the collaborative effort.

Members in each community agreed that the services and programs in the community need to be aligned in order to have collective impact. This would mean all sectors of the community agreeing to collaborate in their community assessment, strategic initiatives, program linkages, referral systems, and resource sharing.

The need for some level of funding to support the communications and convening aspects of the collaboration was also viewed as important by each community. Beyond the operations of the public-private partnership, people saw the need to hold community forums in order to develop a shared vision, create a strategic plan, and implement action plans with each community sector taking responsibility for tasks and activities. Assessment, data, and evaluation expenses would also need to be supported. Suggestions were made to pool and share resources in order to leverage the funding required.

³ Peanut Butter & Jelly in Albuquerque and the Dallas Foundation funding model were mentioned as best practice organizations.

APPENDIX A: MEETING LEADERSHIP

Session Speakers

Dr. Betsy Cahill, Associate Professor, New Mexico State University (Las Cruces)

Kathy Namba, Community Outreach Manager, Holy Cross Hospital (Taos)

Barbara Tedrow, Owner, A Gold Star Academy and Child Development Center (Farmington)

Dr. Peter Winograd, Director, UNM Center for Education Policy Research

Session Leadership Team

The following people served on the Leadership Team to support and facilitate the session.

Heather Balas, Facilitator

Katherine Freeman, Discussion Leader

Gina Maes, Registrar

Lillian Montoya-Rael, Discussion Leader

Charlotte Pollard, Facilitator

Melanie Sanchez Eastwood, Registrar

Marsha Wright, Discussion Leader

APPENDIX B: MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Taos Community Meeting, October 18, 2011

Rick Anglada

Taos
Taos Police Department

Randi Archuleta

Ranchos de Taos
UNM Taos

John Avila

Albuquerque
Village of Corrales

Carlos Cisneros

Questa
New Mexico Legislature

Brandy Corry

Taos
Taos/Colfax Early Childhood
Training & TA Program

Rebecca Corry

Arroyo Hondo
Paso a Paso Network & NM Start
Smart

Elizabeth Crittenden Palacios

Taos
Taos Community Foundation

Yolanda Cruz

Las Vegas
San Miguel County Family &
Community Health Council

Donald Gallegos

Taos
District Attorney

Stella Gallegos

Arroyo Seco
Taos Municipal School Board

Carmen Gonzales

Santa Fe
The Education Center

Judy Hofer

Taos
UNM Taos The Literacy Center

Peter Hofstetter

Taos
Holy Cross Hospital

Tracy Jaramillo

Ranchos de Taos
UNM Taos Kids Campus

Rebecca Latham

Red River
Town of Red River

Margaret Mactavish

El Prado
UNM

Melanie Maestas

Taos
Taos Pueblo Head Start and My 1st
School

David Maggio

Taos
Taos Police Department

Alison McPartlon

Taos
UNM Taos Kids Campus

Kathy Namba

Taos
Holy Cross Hospital Taos First Steps

Barbara Perea-Casey

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Roxanne Rane

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Systems

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Taos
NM Association for the Education
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John Rice

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Coca-Cola Bottling Co.

Michele Scott

El Prado
Anansi Day School

Kelley Tredwin

Taos
Taos Health Systems

Farmington Community Meeting, October 20, 2011

Ann Anthony

Farmington
NM Department of Health

Ray Begaye

Shiprock
New Mexico Legislature

Terri Benn

Kirtland
Ruth Bond Elementary

Lorna Bulwan

Farmington
Bloomfield Schools

Arlene Chacon

Farmington
Farmington Special Preschool

Chuck Culpepper

Bloomfield
Bloomfield Schools

Dan Darnell

Farmington
City of Farmington

Hazel Darnell

Farmington

Jim Dumont

Farmington
Office of U.S. Senator Jeff
Bingaman

Heather Ellison

Farmington
PMS-Children's Services-Head Start

Nila Hamblin

LaPlata
Central Consolidated School
District

Michelle Hill-Jack

Kirtland
The Learning Circle Daycare and
Preschool

Sabrina Hood

Aztec
Aztec Public Library

Carrie Hubbard

PMS head Start

Michael Isaacson

Farmington
Farmington Municipal Schools

Nina Johnson

CYFD

Olivia Kien

Shiprock
Central Consolidated School
District

Ann Kluth-Clark

Fruitland
Central Consolidated School
District

Don Levinski

Shiprock
Business

Gayla McCulloch

Farmington
City of Farmington

Margaret McDaniel

Farmington
San Juan Economic Development
Service

Melissa Meechan

San Juan College

Ron Price

Farmington
Four Corners Coalition for
Marriage & Family

Joshua Ray

Aztec
City of Aztec

Tommy Roberts

Farmington
City of Farmington

Sandy Schumacher

Farmington School Board

Karen Smith

Bloomfield
Bloomfield Schools

Peggy Soria

Kirtland
Central Consolidated School
District

Tom Taylor

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Barbara Tedrow

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GloJean Todacheene

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Flo Trujillo

Farmington
Farmington Public Library

Lois Weigand

Farmington
Emmanuel Baptist C D C and
Academy

Las Cruces Community Meeting, November 1, 2011

Shelly Almaguer

Las Cruces
Community Action Agency of
Southern New Mexico

Rosa Apodaca

Las Cruces
Dona Ana Elementary

Jane Asche

Las Cruces
Retired

Deanna Balderrama

Las Cruces
Las Cruces Public Schools Head
Start

Rosa Barraza

Alamogordo
NM Early Care and Learning
Association

Shannon Bracamonte

Las Cruces
UNM Continuing Education

Travis Brown

Las Cruces
City of Las Cruces Fire Department

Dr. Betsy Cahill

Las Cruces
New Mexico State University

Sue Cain

Las Cruces
League of Women Voters

Catherine Christmann

Las Cruces
Thomas Branigan Memorial Library

Mickey Curtis

Las Cruces
Families and Youth, Inc.

Bernadine Dallago

Las Cruces
Child Crisis Center SNM

Steve Fischmann

Mesilla Park
New Mexico Legislature

Maria Flores

Las Cruces
Children's Reading Foundation

Gloria Gonzales

Las Cruces
NMSU La Vida Institute

Tamara Gantzer-Woods

Dona Ana Community College

Bobbie Grace

Las Cruces
Alameda Elementary

Kim Grinder

Las Cruces
The Toy Box Preschool

Barbara Hall

Las Cruces
Las Cruces Public Schools

Julie Hernandez

Las Cruces
NMSU

Ray Jaramillo

Las Cruces
Alpha School

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Las Cruces
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New Mexico PreK

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Las Cruces
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Connie Phillips

Las Cruces
Las Cruces Public Schools Board of
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Louis Reyes

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Stan Rounds

Las Cruces
Las Cruces Public Schools

Molly Sanchez

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Start

Lynette Schurdevin

Las Cruces

Thomas Branigan Memorial Library

Xochitl Torres Small

Las Cruces

Office of Senator Tom Udall

Melanie Waller

Las Cruces

MECA Therapies

Gill Sorg

Las Cruces

City Of Las Cruces

Luan Wagner Burn

The Community Foundation of

SNM

Richard Williams

Las Cruces

Las Cruces Police Department



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