

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Family Development

A CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY LEARNING • FOUNDED IN 1985

**Celebrating Our 35th Anniversary:
Looking Back, Looking Forward**



FALL 2020

35 Year Anniversary:

Our Mission

Highest Quality Early Childhood Development through Honoring Relationships Rooted in Equity and Social Justice

At the heart of the Family Development Program's work is an image of a child who is powerful, curious and infinitely competent as an active, dynamic learner. We do everything in our power to keep this remarkable spark of learning alive.

Since our earliest beginnings, the Family Development Program has promoted a philosophy of child-centered learning, where teachers and parents are collaborators in supporting children's natural joy, passion for creative discovery, and a wonder of learning.

We believe that quality education for every child defines one of our greatest challenges as a society and as a citizenry. We believe that equity is every child's inalienable right. Our approach to our work is rooted in a deep, enduring respect for the cultural and family heritage that our youngest children know and love dearly.

We believe that our children need to be surrounded by *circles of support* that actively engage their families as full partners with early learning programs and schools. We need strong and trusted relationships with families to tackle the complex and very tough job of education. It's a huge responsibility to instill a lifelong love of learning - learning that nourishes and builds our citizenship, our communities, and quality of life that is shared by all.

The heartfelt understanding and nurturance of children with their families is what defines the Family Development Program.

*by Lois Vermilya,
Family Development Program Director*

The Family Development Program is celebrating our 35th anniversary. This commemorative journal reflects on our heritage of relationships — genuine relationships we have intentionally built with families, educators, communities, each other. Together we make a deep commitment to the well-being of New Mexico's youngest children and their families.

A 35th anniversary is honored in anniversary traditions through the gemstone of coral. Coral is revered in jewelry arts and cultural understanding that are important to many peoples, including our own Tribal, Hispanic, and Asian heritages. Coral conveys meanings for life journeys, determined patience and growing inner wealth. It represents friendship, community, creativity, passion, optimism, enthusiasm, imagination and good luck. These qualities capture the spirit of all of us who dedicate our lives to being part of early childhood care and education.

We hope you will see yourselves in the articles, knowing the important role you have in building cultures of collaboration that place our children at the center of what is most essential for New Mexico's future. Take some time to savor your part in what makes the Family Development Program great. It's you and it's us! While it is the Family Development Program's 35th anniversary, our partnership with all of you is the enduring bond that we all get to celebrate!!

In Gratitude: Community Wealth, Sam Rodriguez takes us on a reflective journey that captures the Family Development Program's (FDP) support of the power of community wealth as he recalls stories of his relationship with community members in Raton, Estancia, Santa Rosa, and Gadsden.

In Celebration of Diversity: 35 Years of Relationships, Ybeth Iglesias captures the legacy of FDP's beliefs and values through the eyes of our past and present collaborative leaders: Maria Chavez, Mary Dudley, Diana Montoya, and Lois Vermilya.

Reflections on the Past and the Future

In Hopes, Dreams, & Visions of Communities: Capturing Participants' Quotes, Cinthia Ramirez shares the heartfelt words of early childhood professionals as they contemplate the meaning of New Mexico's Early Childhood Vision through a playful learning activity.

In Meet Mrs. Rivera: An Ordinary Teacher Who Did Extraordinary Things for New Mexico, Christian Soto introduces us to Olivia Rivera, a longtime friend and colleague, who exemplifies the dignity and dedication of an early childhood teacher and her words of wisdom as she shares her path from a student to pioneer in the early childhood field.

In A History of Early Childhood Education in New Mexico: What Makes Our State Great?, Guest writer and current Director of Policy, Research and Quality Initiatives with the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department, Claire Dudley Chavez highlights the history of early childhood in New Mexico and honors commitment to the well-being of all young children which has laid a strong foundation in building our new department.

In Wemagination Center as a Sacred Space for Adults in Honor of Children, Paige Abrams celebrates the history of the Wemagination Center as a joyful and beautiful place for teachers and caregivers to pause as they explore, reflect, and share their ideas about how children learn.

In The Power of Pause and Reflection, Dorothy Kerwin explores the many ways that FDP employs reflection to guide its practices within our department, our professional development, and our partnership with communities.

In Coming Full Circle, FDP Director Lois Vermilya illuminates the ways in which FDP holds partnering with families at the heart of all that we do, and that our belief in families as leaders has been the common thread woven throughout our long and successful journey.

In Moments Together, Janelle Garcia Cole reminds all of us of the importance of making the most of our everyday interactions with the children in our care. This is the main message of the New Mexico Early Childhood Media Campaign as it supports young children's development and shares important resources with their families. ♥



Lois Vermilya

The Family Development Program publishes the *Family Development Journal* for those working with, working for, and raising children in New Mexico.

Editors: Dorothy L. Kerwin, Teresa Sierra, Lois Vermilya

Contributing writers: Paige Abrams, Claire Dudley Chavez, Janelle Garcia Cole, Ybeth Iglesias, Dorothy L. Kerwin, Cinthia M. Ramirez, Sam Rodriguez, Christian Soto, and Lois Vermilya

Designer: Jana Fothergill

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Gratitude: Community Wealth

by Sam Rodriguez

UNM's Family Development Program (FDP) has had the honor of partnering with amazing early childhood champions throughout the state of New Mexico since its inception. I feel incredibly privileged that my work with FDP has created opportunities to understand the wealth of knowledge, care, resilience and love that exists throughout New Mexico. My understanding of communities is deeply enriched by the personal stories shared by the incredible early childhood advocates I have had the pleasure of partnering with on a regular basis.

In our statewide work, we have had the opportunity to engage a number of communities in a process called Community Mapping. The idea is to develop a visual map of where families with their children gather along with the resources, organizations and groups in the community that serve them. In the process, we form small groups of participants from the same area and invite them to think about all of the resources in their community. As a trainer, Community Mapping provides a powerful way to understand the strengths of a community. It is a remarkable experience to witness participants as they remember forgotten resources or discover new ones. There is always a resulting sense of gratitude as unknown resources and relationships become



better known. This simple exercise actually helps to make their community wealth visible!

I share a few of the many experiences that illustrate the community wealth that runs deeply in the state of New Mexico.

Raton

At the beginning of my career with FDP, we took a lead role in providing training and support to New Mexico Investment Zone communities and I participated in a town hall meeting in Raton, NM. This meeting was intended to create energy to support the development of an early childhood coalition. The town hall attracted a cross sector of representation from the community which included participants from the public schools, faith-based organizations, economic development, public health, human services and concerned citizens. There was a sixteen-year-old in the audience who responded to a question we posed to the entire group. We asked the group to take a moment and think of a word that represents their community. The word this young man shared was hunger. When asked to expand on what he meant by hunger, he indicated that there was a hunger for more opportunities for his community; opportunities he felt only existed outside of Raton.

I was struck with his reflection and his expressiveness. I believe that it captured the emerging commitment of the group and that it represented a hope that there was something more for children and families in the community. Four years later as I reflect back on his statement, it makes me think of the statewide *hunger*: the state-wide desire for there to be more opportunities for children and families.

Estancia

In our Investment Zone work with the community of Estancia we became aware of the strong partnerships that supported a child getting to his school setting. Teachers recognized the challenges one family faced in getting their four children to school. Each child had a different schedule, making it difficult for the youngest sibling to consistently attend his preschool. An early childhood center and a home visiting program



were able to work together in support of this family and helped remedy this situation. It was touching to understand the layers of collaboration that had to play out to get him to school. All of this supportive energy started with making a connection and by providers understanding the constraints that exist for their programs and systems.

The community of Estancia also demonstrated how collaboration supported the viability of programs that often found themselves in jeopardy of closure due to low enrollment. When people came together and had an opportunity to share their stories, they established partnership and found creative problem solving solutions.

Santa Rosa

In the community of Santa Rosa coalition members invested a great deal of time raising money for a Family Play Event. FDP took the Wemagination Resource Center on the road to explore how loose parts and play support learning in partnership with families. With the money raised by the coalition, families were provided with food and home baked goods to enjoy in honor and celebration of family.

Gadsden

In the communities of Gadsden Independent School District, the Early Childhood Coalition organized high school student cadets from Chaparral, Santa Teresa and Anthony to provide child care to families participating in Family Learning Sessions. The students were all actively working towards a Child Development Certificate

and many of them look forward to earning an advanced degree post high school. The student cadets were excited to work directly with the children. The families and the early childhood professionals enjoyed the energy and zest that the student cadets infused in the experience. Families deeply valued the experience of being able to focus on their learning session and reflection away from their children. The student cadets offered amazing insights throughout their involvement and reminded the seasoned professionals about the wonder and excitement we all felt when we entered the field.



These are a few examples of the extraordinary efforts made on the behalf of children and families in small New Mexico communities that sometimes can go unnoticed. They illustrate the commitment and willingness of citizens to work together for all the children in their communities. It is a true privilege to tap into these experiences and learn the story of each community as told by local residents. It is an honor to partner with communities in their desire and yearning for something better for their community. The youth in Raton has helped me understand that yearning and partnership create opportunities for action and mobility. ♥

Celebration of Diversity:

by Ybeth Iglesias, MPA

From the beginning, the UNM Family Development Program has focused on developing authentic relationships, starting with families, then involving communities and engaging local leaders and educators, and finally extending that level of commitment to the larger state. We have always been mindful of the great diversity in New Mexico: the 23 Native Communities, the strong influences of Spanish and Mexican heritages, the contributions from new transplants from around the nation and world, as well as the specific needs of rural and urban settings, significant socio-economic differences and geographic variations. Dr. Maria Chavez, director of the Family Development Program (FDP) from 1985 to 1996, expressed it well in describing FDP as a process:

The Family Development Program is a process of empowerment. It is giving back to people who have been disenfranchised for so many years the ability to know that their opinions are valued, that each is a valued person, that we believe in them, and that we very much care about their children. Family development is the process that we use to engage people in a dialogue and to determine what they want in terms of their destiny.

Dr. Maria Chavez, FDP Founder



Maria Chavez, Mary Dudley and Diana Montoya

Beginning with the *Escuelita Alegre*, a preschool founded in the South Broadway neighborhood of Albuquerque FDP recognized its success and sustainability would be based on the engagement of families and community. FDP was successful in nurturing families who in turn nurtured their children. Their family leadership helped develop the school. Family members participated in committees, selected curriculum and materials, and aided in classrooms twice a month. With the success of *Escuelita Alegre* the Family Development Program was encouraged by funders, community leaders, and state legislators to expand and share our collaborative and inclusive practices throughout New Mexico.



Family Engagement Workshop at the Del Cerro Community Center in Mesquite

35 Years of Authentic Relationships

In reflective conversations with both Diana Montoya, FDP staff member from 1992-2012 and Dr. Mary Dudley, Acting Director/Director from 1993-2003, lessons learned were shared. They highlighted FDP's use of mindful preparation and of bringing facilitated collaborative learning to local communities. Mary and Diana expressed a belief that these strategies were successful because they were infused with FDP core values of establishing authentic relationships and a belief that families and communities are the experts on their own children, families, and communities. Another FDP core value they emphasized is the recognition that children learn best in trusting relationships, and this was demonstrated in FDP's engagement. Whether a community had reached out to FDP, or FDP reached out to an identified organization, a first step was and continues to be educating ourselves about all members of the community and partnering with local leaders to help develop best strategies for the learning. The second step Mary and Diana mentioned, has been FDP's practice of reflecting on the community learning experience and the ways in which FDP could better present and engage them.

Celebrating, respecting, and collaborating with rich and diverse communities is also a principle



Sam Rodriguez facilitates a Family Event in Raton

used by Lois Vermilya, FDP director from 2003 to present. Lois is the creator of FDP's *Early Childhood Collaborative Leadership Tool Kit*. Together with Frances Varela, long-time New Mexico public health educator, Lois researched, collected, and organized best leadership practices, collaborating with many others. The Tool Kit presents the information by inviting readers to explore four "Pathways" toward early childhood collaborative leadership: A Focus on Very Young Children and Their Families, Building a Strong Team of Early Childhood Leaders, Strengthening Relationships with Families and other Community Resources; and Improving the Community for Young Children and Their Families. This distinct approach supports early childhood, leadership strengths, reflection, and authentic relationships- with the flexibility to adapt the pathways to a community's unique background, situation, and environment. A testament to the Tool Kit's usefulness and effectiveness has been its successful implementation in communities throughout NM, the U.S. and in Australia.

The last couple of years FDP has joined forces with old and new partners, concentrating on the enrichment and development of local leadership through facilitated workshops and leadership institutes. By recognizing the strengths of New Mexico communities and by honoring their knowledge, FDP continues to focus on supporting families, local educators, and early childhood service providers as leaders capable of building sustainable collaboration. In 2019, the Family Development Program collaborated with 22 communities in New Mexico and Australia, a continuing testament to FDP's understanding and appreciation for diversity in language, culture and environment including Indigenous, Spanish speaking, urban/rural, mountain/high desert and border communities. ♥

Hopes, Dreams, & Visions of Communities:

by Cinthia M. Ramirez

Visioning sets the stage for tomorrow. It is what we hope and dream can become possible. The UNM Family Development Program (FDP) is honored to be a part of New Mexico's Early Childhood Vision by working with and supporting children and families in communities across the state. FDP shares a comprehensive community-based training model with groups of Early Childhood educators. This model helps build collaborative leadership capacity for building strong partnerships between educators and families so that children can thrive. These efforts are made possible by an initiative funded by the Office of Child Development which supports over 20 communities in New Mexico.

Our strategy is to continue nurturing relationships by understanding roots and purpose. We are deeply grateful to be welcomed into diverse communities where efforts for collaboration, sharing and learning with others take place. FDP engages people in fun learning activities that support reflective practice and leadership development. An activity that we love, *The Snowball Activity*, brings forth a profound awareness of what Early Childhood educators hope,



dream and envision for young children and their families.

Educators around the state from four selected communities – Taos, Clovis, Truth or Consequences and Las Cruces – shared their hopes and dreams which we've clustered around common themes found among the snowballs.

Well-being for children, families and the community

- ♥ I hope for children and families to live healthy, happy lives and understand the importance of healthy family relationships, family interactions and support of each other (Taos, NM educator).
- ♥ To see less children struggle financially, emotionally, mentally and spiritually (T or C, NM educator).
- ♥ Be empowered and resilient (T or C, NM educator).

The importance of having access to quality learning, resources and support for basic needs

- ♥ I hope that all families and children can access the resources and support they need to thrive (Taos, NM educator).

Capturing Participants' Quotes

- ♥ To have access to all opportunities available no matter their socioeconomic background and that all doors open to them (Las Cruces, NM educator).
- ♥ That they are given the necessary tools to succeed (Taos, NM educator).

Providing safe, loving and supportive environments to children and to their families

- ♥ Children and their families are valued as respected citizens (Taos, NM educator).
- ♥ Provide a safe community, education for all (in all levels), and respectful community embracing everyone's culture (Las Cruces, NM educator).
- ♥ My hope is that children are safe and happy where they are, home, childcare, school... (Clovis, NM educator).

Visions for a better community

- ♥ For our children to develop in a happy and full of love community (Clovis, NM educator).
- ♥ Raising the tide so children's boat won't sink (Taos, NM educator).
- ♥ Hope for a connection with parents (Las Cruces, NM educator).

- ♥ To collaborate as an early childhood team with other programs (Taos, NM educator).
- ♥ That the passion and commitment of people in communities all throughout the state make NM's vision for young children and families a reality (Taos, NM educator).

For 35 years, the UNM Family Development Program has envisioned a future of healthier children, families and communities in New Mexico. We are continuously honored to hear the wishes of educators. Individual voices give the Family Development Program inspiration to continue being a supportive center of excellence in early learning for New Mexico. ♥

Snowball Activity

Each person is instructed to write a hope and dream for the children and families their community. Each person then crumples the paper into a "snowball". People engage in a fun "snowball fight". There is always lots of laughter and this activity always brings great energy to the room. After a few minutes, everyone is asked to pick up one snowball and to move into a circle. One by one, participants read aloud each other's hopes and dreams.



Meet Mrs. Rivera: An Ordinary Teacher Who Did

by Christian Soto

Think of a teacher. Think of *that* teacher. The one who smiled when you walked in and made your class feel just like home. Think of that teacher who encouraged you, and did not accept anything but the best from you. New Mexico has an abundance of teachers just like the one you are thinking of right now. Teachers who have passion, conviction, and resilience to champion young children and their families. In 1965, New Mexico welcomed one of its greatest educational pioneers to the classroom, Mrs. Olivia Rivera.

Olivia always wanted to be a teacher. Both her parents were teachers. Her father taught social studies and her mother taught elementary school. Olivia lived in a household where education was valued. At the age of 16, Olivia graduated high school. During her senior year, she wrote an essay on why she wanted to become a teacher. Her teachers were impressed and submitted the essay for a scholarship at the University of New Mexico. She won a \$100 scholarship to UNM where she majored in Elementary Education. After graduating, she was offered a position in Albuquerque for \$3,000 a year. However, she also was offered a position in Oxnard, California for \$5,000 a year. "At that time, \$5,000 a year was like winning the lottery!" She chose Oxnard and made her way to California.

In Oxnard (once the Lima bean capital of the world!), Olivia taught second grade, but she quickly realized there was an unmet need for some of her students. Oxnard is rich in soil and many migrant workers traveled there to harvest the land. The migrant

families had young children, many of whom did not speak English. The young children often fell behind in class. Sometimes this limited exposure to school may have been their last, as families routinely traveled around the U.S. to help during the harvest. Lessons she observed from her mother taught



Olivia that children learn through play. "I knew children learned best through play. That's how I taught children English." In her early 20s, while most of us were still "trying to figure it out", Olivia invented a teaching position for herself. She became a Language Resource Teacher which is an early example of implementing *English as a Second Language*. Olivia loved her time in Oxnard, teaching and being supported by her school. She felt the West Coast was something special. Her school incorporated reflection in lesson plans and implemented a language experience approach to reading. It also valued a child's experience that included nature walks to teach the whole child.

Nevertheless, after a few years in Oxnard, it was time for Olivia and her husband to return to New Mexico. They had enough of the crowds and traffic and wanted to come back to their families. Olivia took a job as a first-grade teacher at Five Points Elementary School in Albuquerque's South Valley.

"Albuquerque was very traditional at that time. They wanted me to teach textbook style. But I knew that's not how children learned." On her first day of teaching, Olivia broke tradition and transformed her class from rows of chairs to a circle. "They looked at me like I was a rebel!" For most of Olivia's students,



Extraordinary Things for New Mexico



her first-grade class was their first experience in a classroom. “New Mexico was very teacher directed, not child focused.”

In 1965 Title 1 – the largest federal assistance program in our nation’s schools – opened the door for half-day kindergarten. In the early 1970’s, Olivia became one of the first kindergarten teachers in Albuquerque Public Schools. “I remember teachers from other grades telling me they wanted to teach kindergarten because all we did was play. I spent a lot of time explaining the theory and power of play.”

In addition to teaching kindergarten at Duranes Elementary School, Olivia and her husband became proud parents to a future engineer: “We encouraged him to play with open-ended materials.” Olivia dreamed about an early care center that educated

the entire family from children to their parents to their grandparents. Olivia helped author books by inviting professionals to observe her early childhood classroom at the University of New Mexico. Olivia’s trailblazing shaped best practices in early childhood and were incorporated at UNM, Albuquerque Public Schools, and the City of Albuquerque Early Childhood Program.

After over 35 years of teaching and working with families, Olivia retired. However, retirement did not last long. Olivia worked with the City of Albuquerque to open a Science Learning Center. She engaged with thousands of children throughout the years. One of her most memorable moments came when a child, overcome with the joy, exclaimed, “This is better than Disneyland!” Although the Center closed in 2017, shortly after her official retirement, Olivia still believes in the power of curiosity. She spends her time volunteering at UNM Family Development Program’s Wemagination Resource Center, sharing her Reggio-inspired wisdom with a new batch of young educators.

“Environment is key to learning,” Olivia told me. “When children have the option to choose, investigate and learn, they begin to make connections. It’s like fire!” When I reflect on my discussion with Olivia, I am drawn to a quote I read many years ago by William Arthur Ward, “The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” Olivia has inspired many generations in New Mexico and her legacy will continue to inspire generations to come. ♥



Early Childhood Education in New Mexico:

by Claire Dudley Chavez, Director of Policy, Research and Quality Initiatives, New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department

New Mexico has a long history of commitment to its children, their families and their communities. Our state's public policies are built upon the belief that families and communities are the platform from which all efforts must be launched. This commitment requires that all work be informed and driven by a deep respect for the diverse values and cultures of New Mexico's families. Although New Mexico faces all of the challenges of a poor state, it has been blessed with an abundance of talent and personal initiative. There is a dedicated cadre of early childhood experts and political champions who have worked tirelessly over many decades to evolve a coordinated system of early child care and education.

Early childhood educators in New Mexico have given generously of their time to partner with state leaders to evaluate, design and plan for early childhood investments so that quality services can be provided to more children.

A lot has come before to prepare a sound foundation for this important moment in time when we launch our new Early Childhood Education and



Care Department. All of us have opportunities to continue to make our state great for ALL of New Mexico's Children and their families.

A New Mexico Timeline of Early Childhood Milestones

- 1965** **Head Start began in New Mexico** the same year the United States Congress created it as an antipoverty program, serving children between the ages of three and five.
- 1967** New Mexico Legislature gave the **State Board of Education authority to adopt regulations for local public school districts to offer kindergarten** with local funding.
- 1973** **Legislative funding to phase in voluntary half-day kindergarten** defined as two and a half hours per day programs.
- 1977** NM Legislature provided **full funding for voluntary, half-day kindergarten for five year-olds**.
- 1984** **New Mexico accepts 94-142 IDEA Federal Funds 94-142** to serve children with disabilities.
- 1986** **PL 99-457-IDEA Part C** required states to serve the developmental needs of children ages birth through 3 and their families who are at risk for or have a diagnosed developmental delay. As a result the school age was lowered in NM, requiring public schools to serve children ages 3 and 4.
- 1986** **Public School Reform Act** made half-day kindergarten mandatory for five-year-olds in NM.
- 1989** **Child Development Board and Office of Child Development** established in statute with authority to promote early childhood development and a high quality early childhood system.
- 1989** The **Early Childhood Interagency Action Team (ECIAT)** was formed to share information and coordinate early childhood program planning across state agencies.
- 1991** **Maternal Child Health County Plan Act** established local county MCH health councils to address needs of pregnant and parenting families and their young children.

What Makes Our State Great?



1992 Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) created in statute to bring together diverse programs for children and families in one cabinet-level agency - the first state in the nation.

1992 C.A.R.E Committee (Committee Advocating Resources and Education) appointed by First Lady to prepare the first state plan for the Child Care Development Block grant.

1993 NM passed Statute 28-18-1 Education of the Handicapped Act which formally established the **Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program**.

1993 Family Preservation/Family Support Title IV-E Waiver Planning Summit convened a cross-sector group that developed the first plan for statewide system of home visitation and family resource centers using this funding stream.

1993 NM became the first state in the nation to adopt an inclusive, **competency-based teacher's license** for children birth through

third grade designed to meet the needs of all children and their families, including those who are low-income, English-Language Learners and children with disabilities or developmental delays.

1995 Partners in Change (PIC), a collaborative inter-agency public-private initiative, developed **New Mexico's Career Lattice** for standardized early education credentialing and training. New Mexico was the first state in the nation to develop this kind of professional development system serving as a model for other states.

1995 Early Childhood Higher Education Task Force created with faculty members from every state college and university, program managers from state early childhood departments, and other stakeholders to align early childhood coursework, articulation and degree requirements.

1997 CYFD implemented a **Tiered Quality Rating System (TQRIS)** for all licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes.

1999 Second generation TQRIS **AIM HIGH: Essential Elements of Quality** created to address child care licensing regulations and increase number of low income children in high quality child care programs.

1999 Considerable federal and state funding provided to the statewide network of **Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAP)** contractors to provide on-site support, training and technical assistance to interested AIM HIGH programs.

2000 New Mexico Legislature passed **legislation to implement voluntary full-day kindergarten programs statewide**, to be phased in over a five-year period, becoming the ninth state in the nation to establish universal access.

2003 Strategic Plan for Infant Mental Health in New Mexico developed by Infant Mental Health Collaborative Committee to increase capacity and training of Early Childhood professionals for addressing mental health issues of pregnant women, young children and their families.

2003 NM FIT establishes Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) as a statewide system of support for infants, toddlers and their families.

2003 NM State Constitution amended and the Public Education Department (PED) was established with a Cabinet Secretary reporting to the Governor.

2003 New Mexico Children's Cabinet established by Executive Order to include all Cabinet level Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries as well as a few appointed members from community.

2004 CYFD began funding the T.E.A.C.H.® Scholarship Program so that child care teachers could access the professional development system.

2005 New Mexico Pre-K Act passed as policy priority of Governor and Lt Governor with initial \$2.5 million appropriated for this program.

2005 Children's Cabinet Act established the **New Mexico Children's Cabinet in statute.**

2005 AIM HIGH Level 1 criteria embedded in child care licensing regulations and Revised Child Care Assistance Regulations included requirement that programs must have 2 stars or higher license by July 1, 2007 to receive child care assistance.



2007 New Mexico received an Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Grant from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of Health Resources and Services Administration to convene a cross-agency, cross-sector group to develop a comprehensive **Early Childhood Strategic Plan** to align systems for young children birth to five and their families.

2008 Home Visitation Work Group developed a 3 year plan for a long-term statewide system of delivering universal home visitation for families from pregnancy to age 5, defining home visitation outcomes to meet goals/outcomes established by Children's Cabinet.

2008 DOH awarded one of the first six federal Project LAUNCH grants from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) based on the Early Childhood Strategic Plan, with Santa Fe Children's Project administered by the United Way of Santa Fe County established as a demonstration site.

2008 Early Childhood Investment Committee (ECIC) convened as a group of business leaders and economists for legislative support of early childhood development. ECIC recommended the creation of the **NM Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP).**

2009 New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP) formed and provided statewide leadership for development, passing and implementation of The NM Early Childhood Care and Education Act.

2010 Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) established with members appointed by the Governor to develop plans and recommendations for an aligned early childhood system.

2010 Child Care Licensing Regulations revised to include the **AIM HIGH 2 STAR** criteria in recognition that 70% of licensed programs had achieved 2 stars.

2011 FOCUS, as the third generation TQRIS, built upon successes of AIM HIGH to focus on children's learning, providing additional professional development supports to



teachers for competency as observers and planners of appropriate curriculum.

- 2011 New Mexico Early Childhood Care and Education Act** established essential components of quality, a state Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC), and a non-reverting fund for development of a comprehensive, aligned early childhood system of systems.
- 2013 Home Visiting Accountability Act** established CYFD funded home visiting programs and created a framework for “standards-based” home visiting throughout state.
- 2013 New Mexico received a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC)** administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.
- 2018 5-Year RTT-ELC Award** supported **expansion of TQRIS and implementation of FOCUS pilot program**; capacity-building of CYFD designated **early childhood investment zones**; **expansion of professional development activities**; development of a cross-agency **early childhood data system**; and development of **universal kindergarten assessment tool**.

- 2018** New Mexico reorganized approach and funding as a **Unified and Integrated, High Quality Professional Development System**.
- 2018 Medicaid funded home visiting** began as a pilot program to provide broader home visiting access for qualifying families.
- 2018 Child Care Accountability Act** authorized CYFD to establish early childhood care program standards for licensing, professional development and continued investment in quality.
- 2018 CYFD Early Childhood Scholarship Program** established for early childhood teachers, educational assistants, administrators, and program directors to afford coursework that leads to credentials and degrees.
- 2019 Governor signs Senate Bill 22 establishing New Mexico’s Early Childhood Education and Care Department**.
- 2019** New Mexico awarded **Pre School Development Grant** for statewide Needs Assessment, Strategic Plan development, Early Childhood Media Campaign, professional development and parent education.
- 2020 New Department of Early Childhood Education and Care** established with first Cabinet-level Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Education and Care. ♥

Acknowledgements: This article is adapted from a longer analysis included as Appendix C in the NMECDP and NM First 2014 Report “New Mexico Child Care and Early Education Task Force.” Gaps in the timeline were filled from research prepared by Frances Varela for the UNM Center for Educational Policy Research (CEPR); Think New Mexico’s 1999 Paper Entitled “Increasing Student Achievement in New Mexico: the Need for Universal Access to Full-Day Kindergarten;” and from a PowerPoint Andy Gomm prepared entitled “The Long and Winding Road: A Walk Through NM FIT History” (June 2019). Lois Vermilya, Director, Family Development Program assisted with the compilation of the timeline.

The Wemagination Center:

by Paige Abrams

Wemagination means “Imagining Together”. The Wemagination Center is a place for people to imagine together and to get materials of foam, plastic, wood, cloth, or paper, to take what is in our heads and hearts, and make it real in our hands.

– Michael LaFlamme, 1997

For 23 years, the UNM Family Development Program’s (FDP) Wemagination Resource Center has supported educators and families in learning about the efficacy of play as the cornerstone of healthy developmental progress in the earliest years of life. As a teaching methodology, play gives children thousands of opportunities for understanding the world while also teaching them the secret to lifelong learning — that is, learning how to learn. The importance of play for children is well documented. Now, researchers are turning their attention to its benefits for adults. What they’re finding is that play isn’t just about goofing off; it can also be an important means of reducing stress and contributing to overall well-being.

Within this context, Wemagination has long provided a space for adults to observe and reflect on their own experiences during play. The impetus began with a book called, *Playing with Ideas* (Michael LaFlamme in conjunction with Family Development

Program, 1998), which followed 50 New Mexican early childhood teachers as they moved through their professional development journeys. It described, in detail, the learning that is happening in their classrooms when they use primarily open-ended materials like those typically found at Wemagination Resource Center. Over time, as we have researched and developed hands-on adult play experiences, we continuously notice that this work naturally strengthens early childhood practices in the classroom.

Most resources for teachers are focused on content and pedagogy, overlooking the very real social, emotional, and cognitive demands of teaching itself. Wemagination Resource Center helps FDP promote the calm, relaxed, but enlivened classroom environment that we hope educators create for their students. Wemagination is intended to be just that sort of space for adult learners.

However, it really can seem as if, between personal and professional responsibilities, there’s no time to play; but play is just as pivotal for adults as it is for kids. “We don’t lose the need for novelty and pleasure as we grow up,” Scott G. Eberle, Ph.D, editor of the *American Journal of Play*. Play brings joy. It’s vital for problem solving, creativity and relationships. In his book *Play*, author and psychiatrist Stuart Brown, MD, compares play to oxygen. He writes, “. . .it’s all around us, yet goes mostly unnoticed or unappreciated until it is missing. “Any time you think play is a waste, remember that it offers some serious benefits for both you and others.” As Brown says in his book, “Play is the purest expression of love.”

In this plugged-in, hyper-connected world, we need to give our minds a break. We do benefit from moments allowing us to unplug and to create space which allows for time away from technology and information input. Play is sometimes perceived as unproductive, petty, or even a guilty pleasure. The notion is that once we reach adulthood, it’s time to get serious. At Wemagination, we believe play is a powerful antidote to the stressors we struggle with most often.

Looking forward, our goal at the Wemagination Resource Center is to create an inspiring space which addresses the current needs of the early



A Sacred Space for Adults in Honor of Children



Everyday J.U.N.K. Joy in Uncovering New Knowledge

A WEMAGINATION Cookbook of Recipes for Family Fun
and Learning at Home



Check out our Everyday J.U.N. K Recipes for some Joy as a family!
Find them at our website:<https://fdp.unm.edu/everyday-junk-recipes.html>

childhood workforce and adults who have young children in their care in New Mexico. People who put all their inner resources into the children they work with deserve a sacred space that may look like it is for children, but is just for them. We want to foster a sense of belonging for teachers and family members and offer more opportunities intended for study, dialog, and collaboration.

As we look back over Wemagination's rich history, and how it is seamlessly intertwined with the community work we do throughout the state, we see an engaged community - a community of families,

educators, health providers and donors — who come together with a shared vision about what is healing and beneficial. In offering new professional development seminars and learning communities we will further fortify Wemagination as a place for adults to experience their own learning and joy.

One hundred and fifty years of research tells us that learning through play is the most beneficial way to learn. It takes approximately 400 repetitions to create a new synapse in the brain, unless it is done with PLAY, in which case it takes 10-20 repetitions.

- Dr. Karen Purvis, ref. Ohio NAEYC

The Power of Pause and Reflection

by Dorothy L. Kerwin

From its very beginning the UNM Family Development Program (FDP) has created a culture of reflection that strengthens and enhances all of the work that we do for young children and their families in New Mexico. Taking the time to pause and reflect allows us to reassess what is working and consider ways to improve ourselves, our workshops, and our relationships with our early childhood partners throughout the state.



From its inception 35 years ago, FDP has incorporated this practice within ourselves, with each other and with the communities that we serve. This culture of reflection impacts all aspects of our work. The FDP training staff is a learning community where we intentionally invest time to study and reflect on new information and insights that each of us bring back from conferences, current research, community meetings and our training workshops. We then find ways to incorporate lessons learned into our work. When we create the agenda for a workshop, we stop to consider both the content and the audience before we begin. We ask ourselves what information are we trying to share and what is the best question, activity, and/or method that



will allow the participants to apply it to their daily interactions with young children. Our shared commitment to thoroughly prepare allows us to be present in the moment and able to flexibly adjust to meet the needs of the audience. This practice has served us well and yet we are aware that we can always improve, which is why we take time to fully examine workshop evaluations. Listening to valuable feedback encourages us to reflect on the various ways to make our next workshop better.

FDP's workshops are designed so that early childhood professionals are invited to reflect on their beliefs and knowledge of best practices for working with young children and their families. Whether you attend as a director, teacher, assistant, home visitor, early invention specialist, health worker or parent, we ask questions to facilitate both reflection and discussion. We also facilitate hands-on activities that are intentionally designed to create a safe, joyful learning environment that inspires rich conversations. Over the years, we have learned that these methods help participants internalize the content so that it is easier to access when it's most needed. This process encourages us all to learn and grow together as well as to share this learned knowledge with others.

FDP has a long history of developing partnerships with communities throughout the state to offer high quality early childhood professional development that includes how children learn and how educators and families can learn together. By listening to our community partners, we create authentic

relationships that honor the strengths of each community. In addition to supporting early childhood professionals in their individual work with children, we also are currently supporting early childhood community coalitions and networks by providing Early Childhood Collaborative Leadership Institutes. This training experience gives them tools to be more effective in their collective efforts to meet the needs of their communities. They are asked to reflect on who is at the table and who needs to be at the table. They also reflect on their shared values to identify specific and powerful messages that work for the whole. By pausing together in reflection, communities are inspired to unite in action.

UNM's Family Development Program is known for honoring relationships, for creating authentic partnerships, for encouraging collaborative leadership and for advocating for social justice. A fundamental thread that weaves through all of these foundational qualities is our culture of reflection. At our recent end of the year celebration, we gifted each other with favorite quotes. This led Paula Steele, one of our beloved retired trainers, to comment: "FDP has a way of bringing the reflective practice to bear in the most accommodating ways and that's what makes FDP successful." ♥



In appreciation of all of the early childhood professionals who work together in reflection so all young children and their families can thrive.



Coming Full Circle

by Lois Vermilya, Director

The Family Development Program (FDP) began 35 years ago out of a deep commitment to families as essential partners for ensuring the well-being and educational success of their children. Our founder, Dr. Maria Chavez, went door-to-door in the South Broadway neighborhood in Albuquerque where she listened to families talk about their concerns for their community and for their children. Parents decided that a preschool was their highest priority and from their creativity and determination to work in partnership with educators, *Escuelita Alegre* was born. For many years, this bilingual preschool provided multicultural experiences and shared learning opportunities with families that grew into some of the successful preschool programs that are part of the City of Albuquerque's Early Childhood Division today. The voice of parents in our own local community is what shaped the Family Development Program's long-lasting commitment to early childhood education, defining our mission: to Provide the Highest Quality Early Childhood Development through Honoring Relationships Rooted in Equity and Social Justice.

The Family Development Program sustains a rich heritage of working closely with educators and families, forging authentic relationships that are rooted in trust and mutual respect. A set of Guiding Principles has provided foundational understanding of how we approach early education. We recognize that families are devoted to their children, nurturing them in ways that express their family and cultural values to help their children truly know who they are. FDP partners with programs who work directly with families in an effort to promote authentic family engagement where we all are active learners and allies. We recognize that both educators and families have vital roles, rights, and responsibilities to be advocates for our state's youngest children.

Our approach sees all children, families and educators as leaders.

We are working with 19 statewide community partners in comprehensive training that provides one and one-half days of training for educators followed by a two-day Family Leadership Institute for Family Leaders from their programs. The goal is to develop new shared leadership capacity that



fully supports family leaders as essential partners for achieving quality early education for children.

The Family Development Program is honored to be part of New Mexico's vision for the full participation of families as authentic partners and leaders who help shape improvements for our early learning system. We believe that all of us – parents and educators together with our local communities – have a vital role to play.

Early childhood public policy reforms in New Mexico are built upon the belief that families and community must be the platform from which all efforts are launched. We believe that all work must be informed by and driven by a deep respect for the diverse values and cultures of New Mexico's families. We are committed to involving families and communities as partners and decision-makers. Early learning programs that support the full participation of every child and family build on these strengths by promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child.

Adapted from *NM FOCUS*

The Family Development Program is proud to be connecting our past to our future, coming full circle to place children and families at the center of the agenda. We recognize that we all are in this together. We have the opportunity to focus on family strengths as an essential quality for all the good work ahead. ♥

Our Guiding Principles for Family Engagement, Partnership, Leadership

Throughout our history, the Family Development Program has defined its work through a set of values that serve as Guiding Principles for genuine partnership with families in support of their children's learning.

- ♥ **Appreciate Cultural Wealth:** When early childhood professionals truly believe that families are a child's first and most important teachers, there can be a true reciprocity of shared knowledge which benefits from each other's strengths rather than be threatened by them.
- ♥ **Build on Strengths:** Every child, teacher and family is capable and resourceful. This fundamental belief allows us to discover strengths in ourselves and others that we can build upon to work together and learn from each other.
- ♥ **Celebrate Family Cultures and Traditions:** Family and cultural diversity enrich the learning process. We can honor a family's culture and heritage by asking for their input and sharing their traditions. We need to engage their guidance rather than assume we already know.
- ♥ **Create Authentic Relationships:** An authentic relationship built on mutual trust and respect between early childhood programs and families is foundational to building a welcoming environment. The time it takes to develop strong relationships is an investment in positive outcomes for all, especially for our children.
- ♥ **Cultivate a Culture of Inclusion and Collaboration:** It is important to include all families in the work we do. As we encourage families to lead, advocate and make decisions, we recognize that there is no one family voice. Often times there are conflicting needs and perspectives that need to be addressed. When we cultivate a culture of collaboration, dealing with differences becomes easier.
- ♥ **Enjoy the Process:** We need to intentionally create opportunities for families and teachers to work together, play together and learn together. Let joy light the way.
- ♥ **Examine Our Bias:** When we take time to reflect, we can recognize and overcome our personal biases which allow us to build trust. We need to encourage and support each other in this practice.
- ♥ **Honor Heritage Languages:** We honor a family's first language by making sure we provide interpreters and translation. It is also important to encourage families to speak and read to their children in any language.
- ♥ **Listen:** Clear, concise communication can go a long way to preventing potential conflict. Communicating begins with listening. It is important not to make assumptions. We also should not ask for input if you are not going to give it significant consideration.
- ♥ **Partner with Families:** When you know families strengths, you can build upon them - but we all need some tools and support. Ask families what type of classes, events and activities would be most supportive to them. Invite families to partner with you to make them happen.
- ♥ **Promote Advocacy:** Advocate for families by supporting and promoting policies that provide resources and respect to all families. Encourage families to advocate for their children by developing skills to voice their concerns. Recognize that the advocacy continuum begins with speaking up for the needs of one's own child and then continues as advocacy within one's community. Advocacy can grow to include working with others to create positive policies that create family-friendly systems.
- ♥ **Take Time for Storytelling:** Everyone has a story. Listening to each other's stories is a wonderful way to get to know each other and understand each other's perspectives.

Moments Together

By Janelle Garcia Cole

Every child deserves a champion - an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.

Rita Pierson

It is the special interplay between parent and child that makes moments together so meaningful. These are the moments where we carry our babies in our arms and rock them to sleep with a lullaby, when we play peek a-boo and hear their first giggles, or when we watch them take their first step. These moments are precious in every way and can impact our children for a lifetime.

These magical everyday moments have become the foundation for our State's new Early Childhood Media Campaign, **Moments Together** (<https://momentstogethernm.org>). The goal of this campaign is to support families in the healthy development, well-being and playful learning of their children by reminding them of the importance of daily interactions with their children, and by linking families to the resources that can help them along the way. This campaign is being launched on billboards and print and broadcast media in communities throughout the state on behalf of our new **Early Childhood Education and Care Department** with Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky at its helm. It is an exciting, collaborative time for early childhood in New Mexico. Our new department has begun the challenging yet exciting endeavor of bringing all early childhood programs under one department by hosting weekly conference calls to match early childhood professionals with state



resources to weather the trials and tribulations of Covid-19. This spirit of communication and collaboration is at the heart of the new department and at the heart of the Moments Together Media Campaign. Rather than starting from scratch, this campaign builds upon the recent collaborative efforts of the Bernalillo County Early Childhood Coalition known as ECAP (Early Childhood Accountability Partnership).

When I came to the Family Development Program (FDP) over 5 years ago, I was honored to be involved with ECAP. This is a group of early childhood leaders from many different programs; all of whom are dedicated to best practices for families. Two different workgroups collaborated to create *Making Moments Matter* as a local communications campaign for families and educators in Bernalillo County. *Making Moments Matter* called attention to finding beautiful moments in everyday interactions with our youngest children. Some of the key components of its original approach are:

- To raise the awareness of early learning: Babies are always learning—they are born that way.
- It's simple, and can be done anywhere: Every moment, every environment is an opportunity to learn.
- Positive Messaging for parents/caregivers.
- You already have what it takes to teach them.

A Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5) made it possible for the NM Children, Youth & Families Department to award development of our state's early childhood media campaign to four partnered organizations: United Way of Central New Mexico, NMPBS, Media Desk and the Family Development Program. I have been excited to be part of this dynamic team that has taken the initial success of *Making Moments Matter* and adapted it to become the new statewide media campaign, *Moments Together*. Each organization provided its unique strength to the project. FDP staff members provided child development expertise along with relational partners in our rural communities.

FDP used our strong relationships with early childhood supporters to organize small Family Focus Groups from diverse communities throughout New Mexico. We wanted the campaign's logo and messages to be reviewed and improved by families, all of whom offered thoughtful insights and recommendations that have been incorporated into the campaign. FDP hosted 14 Family Focus Groups that began in February 2020, meeting face to face, and ended in April 2020 via video conferences. Because this campaign is a celebration of New Mexico's diverse communities and families, we made sure to host groups from all corners of our state including tribal communities. We also intentionally included both fathers and grandparents and hosted the groups in both English and Spanish.

I have realized as my own boys have gotten older that they didn't need fancy or expensive toys. They needed my attention, my love, and me. As a fulltime teacher and mom, it was clear that I could make the little moments count. I could sing to them while driving in the car, I could smile at them while cooking dinner, and I could talk to them while getting them dressed. This is the central message that our campaign shares with all families in New Mexico.

I am honored to be a part of New Mexico's Early Learning Campaign. Look out for our messages and share them in the grocery store, at your family events, and at the health offices in your community. We can all be a part of the success and healthy development of the children in this beautiful state of New Mexico. ❤️



Moments Together

Ready. Love. Learn.

- Share stories with me: Share stories with me during the week, even when I'm learning to speak.
- Play with me: When we take turns, there's a lot to learn.
- Talk with me: However we talk, I like it a lot.
- Smile with me: A smile from you makes me glad through and through.
- Snuggle with me: I feel safe and snug when you give me a hug.
- Sing with me: It doesn't matter to me if you sing off-key.
- Dance with me: Get up and move. Let's groove.

Momentos Juntos

Listo. Amor. Aprende.

- Comparte historias conmigo: Sus historias me hacen sentir seguro y tranquilo.
- Juega conmigo: Juega conmigo cada día y voy aprendiendo empatía.
- Habla conmigo: Como sea que hablemos nos entendemos.
- Sonríe conmigo: Tu sonrisa me ilumina.
- Acurrúcate conmigo: Con solo un abrazo tuyo me siento más seguro.
- Canta conmigo: ¡Canta, canta, canta, no necesitamos banda!
- Baila conmigo: ¡Ahí que disfrutar, vamos a bailar!

<https://momentsnm.org/> Easy Tips and Free Resources for Early Learning

A campaign of the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department





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UNM Family Development Program

1 University of New Mexico

MSC06 3630

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-0001

<http://fdp.unm.edu>