



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 9, 2021

ECECD Launches Pay Parity Program for PreK Educators

SANTA FE – Today, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) announced that it has launched a new program to establish pay parity between New Mexico PreK teachers and their counterparts working in public schools. PreK teachers and directors who hold a bachelors or master’s degree in a qualifying degree field and who currently work in a NM PreK, early PreK, or mixed-age PreK classroom at a community-based program can now apply to receive a monthly supplement to their income that better aligns their pay with PED salary scales for public school teachers.

“New Mexico PreK teachers play a vital role in ensuring that our children enter Kindergarten prepared and ready to succeed,” said ECECD Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky. “Despite the fact that many PreK teachers and directors hold advanced educational degrees and qualifications comparable to their colleagues in K-12, their pay is typically much lower. Our new pay parity program aims to close this pay gap so that New Mexico PreK educators are compensated more equitably at a level that better reflects their professional skills and credentials.”

The new PreK parity payment structure aligns with PED salary scales based on teachers’ credentials, years of experience, and geographic location based on an extensive review and comparison of salaries among 31 school districts

across the state. Those eligible to receive parity payments fall into three categories which will determine their parity supplement:

- Category 1: Bachelor's Degree/0-3 years of experience in NM PreK
- Category 2: Bachelor's Degree/more than three years of experience in NM PreK
- Category 3: Master's Degree or Doctorate/five or more years of experience in NM PreK

To be eligible, applicants must be a teacher or director in a community-based New Mexico PreK setting (not public school) and hold at least a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Multicultural Education, or other degree paired with an alternative licensure in early childhood. ECECD currently estimates 133 teachers, 46 directors, and 38 teaching assistants statewide will qualify for the program.

Depending on geographic location, education, and experience, qualified PreK teachers can expect the parity program to bring their salaries up within a range of \$41,000 - \$65,613 – well above the current average PreK teacher's salary.

One of the first educators to qualify is Mikila Crespin, a PreK teacher at the Western New Mexico University Child Development Center in Silver City, NM. Crespin, of Laguna Pueblo, has her Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from WNMU and seven years of experience teaching PreK, qualifying her for an additional \$1300 a month through the ECECD Pay Parity Program.

"I am super grateful for this program," said Mikila. "I feel so valued – like my efforts haven't gone unnoticed. The work we do at the PreK level is so important for the growth and development of children, and we need more people with a passion for children to join this career path. The Pay Parity Program makes teaching PreK a more attractive career option. I especially hope that more tribal members learn about this program so we can bring more indigenous educators into New Mexico's classrooms."

###

The New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) launched in 2020, one of only four cabinet level agencies nationwide that consolidated all early childhood agencies under one roof. ECECD's mission is to optimize the health, development, education, and well being of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers through a family-driven, equitable, community-based system of programs and services. Learn more about how ECECD supports children, families, and the early childhood professionals that serve our communities at nmececd.org. On Facebook and Twitter as @NewMexicoECECD.