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Central New Mexico Education Needs Assessment

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CENTRAL NEW MEXICO EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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Program, Moriarty Municipal School District, Mountainair Public School District, Nacimiento Community Foundation, NAPPR (Native American Professional Parent Resources), National Children's Study (UNM – Valencia), Navajo Nation – Pueblo Pintado Chapter, Navajo Nation – Torreon Chapter, NMAEYC (New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children), NMBREE (New Mexico Business Roundtable for Educational Excellence), New Mexico Alliance for School Based Health, New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department, New Mexico Children's Cabinet, New Mexico Community Foundation, New Mexico Department of Health, New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership, New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, New Mexico Public Education Department, New Mexico Voices for Children, Partnership for a Healthy Torrance, PRO (Parents Reaching Out), Partnership for Community Action, Rio Rancho School District, San Felipe Pueblo, Santo Domingo Pueblo, St. Joseph Community Health, Torrance County Head Start, Torrance County Project Office, UNM Center for Development & Disability, UNM Center for Education Policy Research, UNM College of Education, UNM College of Nursing, UNM Family Development Program, UNM – Valencia, Valencia Resiliency Corps, Varela Group, YDI (Youth Development Inc).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of BBER's research is to identify areas (issues and places) where United Way's community investments will have the greatest impact in improving educational outcomes in the four county service area. The focus is on 'student readiness' rather than activities for which school districts are directly responsible.

Research methodology –

- BBER conducted a national review of educational policy and analysis, with focus on best practices and effective programming. A goal of the review was to identify specific programs – community-based, statewide and national – that have proven records of success. This included a review of more than 25 United Way initiatives, including all of those in the southwest and in other regions that are comparable to central New Mexico.

- BBER conducted in-depth interviews with 89 experts throughout the four county area to better understand the conditions unique to our region. These individuals included policymakers, advocates, researchers, educators, administrators and service providers. The interviews sought to identify gaps in available services and the barriers faced by local families, communities and service providers.

- BBER collected and analyzed quantitative data from various sources, including NM Public Education Department and the U.S. Census Bureau, to better understand the local socioeconomic determinants of educational achievement and to identify at-risk areas throughout the four county area. To address issues specific to students and their schools, the research was conducted using data specific to the enrollment boundaries of elementary schools, allowing for fine-grain geographical analysis.

Best Practices in educational support services –

There is a strong consensus among both national and local educators, researchers and policy leaders regarding best practices in educational support services:

- Screening and needs assessment: broad-based and needs assessment programs help to identify at-risk children and families at an early point, when the impact is the greatest, and to encourage participation by minimizing the stigma associated with individualized assessment.

- Start early: programs that address the needs of young children and families (beginning with pre-natal support) produce the best outcomes and have the highest return on investment. Schools report that while many have had success in limiting the widening of the achievement gap between the educationally advantaged and disadvantaged children over the course of their schooling, the gap that children face upon first entering school tends to persist throughout, even resulting in differences in graduation rates.

- Quality counts: despite their costs, quality programming generates higher rates of return on investment than lower-cost programs. Quality programming begins with a professional and well-trained workforce, and is especially important in early childhood services.

- Parent and family engagement: effective educational support services must address the needs of the 'whole child', at home, at school and in the community. Effective support programs are multifaceted and well-coordinated, and engage caregivers as the child's first educator and primary advocate. A child at-risk at home is likely to be a child at-risk at school, and only interventions that engage parents and families are likely to be effective over the long term.

- Engaging adolescents: to prevent disengagement and drop out, children going through difficult middle and high school years benefit from programs that connect their educational experience to their individual interests and affirm their continuing value to the community. These programs help to make

their academic experiences relevant and engage youth intellectually, emotionally and socially. Service learning programs are useful models.

- Alignment and braiding of schools and communities: scalable and sustainable programming requires leadership that extends beyond the isolated impacts of individual programs. Leaders must work together to align services from 'cradle to career', and to form cross-sector partnerships based on a common agenda, shared metrics, mutually reinforcing activities and continuous communication, and to support dedicated service organizations.

In short, the keys to successful educational support programs are early screening and intervention, parent, family and community engagement, and the coordination, alignment and integration of services and funding.

Challenges in providing educational support services in central New Mexico –

Despite a consensus about best practices, families, service providers and funders in central New Mexico face significant barriers in effective implementation of these best practices.

- Family perspective: children who underperform in school are often raised in families that do not value educational achievement and/or do not associate early childhood development with later educational achievement. Caregivers, particularly those with children most at-risk, often find access to services prohibitively complex and/or socially stigmatizing and unwelcoming. Middle and high school students often disengage from school studies because they fail to see relevance in relation to personal interests and social lives. Families face very different barriers in accessing services in urban areas such as Albuquerque or Los Lunas and the rural areas of Sandoval, Torrance, Valencia counties. Programs often fail to address the specific conditions of each of these areas.

- Provider perspective: funding mechanisms tend to encourage providers to differentiate ('silo') rather than collaborate. This is true both among community-based organizations (CBOs) and between CBOs and schools.

Professional culture and training also contribute to this differentiation and separation of services. Further, service providers often lack a systematic approach in identifying populations most in need of services. Finally, many providers in central New Mexico, especially those working in early childhood services, find it difficult to recruit and retain a qualified workforce.

- Policy perspective: individual funders and funders as a group lack a wide-system perspective and an institutional framework necessary to promote coordination and collaboration among service providers; like CBOs, funders tend to work in isolation of each other, especially as regards the allocation and distribution of resources. Further, funders often fail to require and/or account for the costs of data collection and assessment, making it difficult to implement evidenced-based programming.

In short, while system wide funding is inadequate and gaps in services are everywhere, investments to improve the efficiency of existing funding – by facilitating access and promoting coordination – are likely to have the greatest impact in improving outcomes.

Recommendations –

These recommendations are designed to alleviate barriers specific to central New Mexico to enable the implementation of commonly accepted best practices.

- Early screening and universal application: work with local hospitals and birthing centers, service organizations and schools to create more universal systems for screening and needs assessment. This initiative will help to ensure that services are reaching those most at-risk and also provide reliable and consistent information about community and individuals' needs. Model: UtahClicks.org.

- Early childhood organization: work with early childhood service advocates and providers to establish a funded organization to coordinate early childhood programs and initiatives; to write a strategic plan with clearly stated objectives and metrics; to serve as an advocacy and resource center; and to provide

cross-disciplinary training and facilitate programmatic collaboration both between community-based service providers and with public schools.

- Professional development in early childhood services: work with early childhood service advocates and providers to promote and support the professionalization and training of the child development service workforce. This is an essential step toward the provision of quality child development programs that are known to lead to improved academic performance. Model: T.E.A.C.H. NM

- Community-based service learning programs: work with schools and community-based organizations to establish community service programs for middle and high school students. These programs help to prevent school dropout by extending the child's educational experiences beyond the classroom to areas relevant to their personal and community life, including career-focused skill development. Model: Nashville's Oasis Youth Innovation initiatives and Quantum Opportunities Program.

- Case management and service coordination: privately fund and/or incentivize effective case management services to engage and empower parents; coordinate child and family 'wraparound' services; provide referrals and facilitate access to available resources; and help to align services during critical transition periods. Programs to incentivize collaboration and case management could be modeled on the Pathways model first developed at Ohio's Community Health Access Program,, now used at Bernalillo County Pathways.

- Community schools and Family resource centers: work with other funders, community based organizations, service providers and schools to establish 'one-stop-shops' that aggregate family and educational support services and facilitate case management and service referral. In collaboration with public school systems, resource centers could be located in community schools, which facilitate interaction with teachers and other school professionals, ease of access, connections to the community, while also reducing costs.

Additionally, funding could be used to restore programs established under New Mexico's Family and Youth Resource Act . Importantly, resource centers should be differently structured in urban and rural areas:

- o In urban areas, resource centers should be located in high need areas with extended hours to accommodate family and school schedules. ABC Community Schools Partnership could serve as a key liaison in the APS school district.

- o In rural areas, resource centers should be on a consistent but rotating schedule in various locations (e.g. public schools) in each county to minimize the very strict limitations of geographical isolation and high travel costs of families.

Cross-sector partnerships to align services and braid funding: collaborate with other funders, service providers, community based organizations, and perhaps schools to establish a forum or partnership to define priorities, identify gaps in educational support programming, develop metrics to track progress, coordinate funding and ensure the sustainability of effective programs. This is essential because currently child service and educational support programs are driven by the initiatives of providers, which must differentiate programs to secure funding; only funders have an explicit interest in system wide efficiency and collaboration. Models: Strive Partnership and 21st Century Schools.

1.   INTRODUCTION

In late 2010, United Way of Central New Mexico contracted with UNM's Bureau of Business and Economic Research to conduct an assessment of needs for educational support services in their four county service area. The area includes Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance and Valencia Counties. The specific objective was to identify areas (issues and places) where United Way's investments will have the greatest impact in improving educational outcomes in the four county service area. The focus is on 'student readiness' rather than activities for which school districts are directly responsible.

The project drew information from three main sources. 1) BBER conducted a national review of educational policy and analysis, with focus on best practices and effective programming. A goal of the review was to identify specific programs – community-based, statewide and national – that have proven records of success. 2) BBER conducted in-depth interviews with eighty-nine experts throughout the four county area to better understand the conditions unique to our region. These individuals included policymakers, advocates, researchers, educators, administrators and service providers. The interviews sought to identify gaps in available services and the barriers faced by local families, communities and service providers. 3) BBER collected and analyzed quantitative data from various sources, including NM Public Education Department and the U.S. Census Bureau to better understand the local socioeconomic determinants of educational achievement and to identify at-risk areas throughout the four county area. To address problems directly facing students and their schools, the research was conducted using data specific to the enrollment boundaries of elementary schools, allowing for fine-grain geographical analysis.

This report is organized according to the three phases of data collection, and concludes with a series of recommendations to improve educational outcomes in the four county area. In general, the recommendations follow point-by-point the best

practices surveyed in the first section. Some of the recommendations are narrow and specific, and may yield positive outcomes in the short term. Others are much broader, though hopefully no less specific. The benefits of these broader initiatives may take longer to be realized and require a greater commitment of leadership. But if implemented these initiatives may result in much deeper changes by helping to reduce some of the barriers that seem to persistently undermine the best efforts and the best intentions.

2. BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES – A REVIEW OF NATIONAL RESEARCH LITERATURE

This report begins with a summary review of current research on best practices in the field of student support services. This review considers academic research literature, educational policy discussions, and evaluations of specific programmatic initiatives.

Taken together, the body of literature on the subject of educational policy and student support services is enormous and ever expanding. A comprehensive and detailed review of this literature is beyond the scope of this project. In particular, it is beyond our means to examine the finer points of the many debates and their empirical foundations, and to come to any certain position in regard to these debates. Instead, this review undertakes the more modest goal of summarizing the points of relative consensus regarding best practices. Where possible, the discussion of best practices is supported with references to well-regarded programs and initiatives.

A. Broad-based and universal application

Effective education support service programs are characterized by: the identification of children most at-risk who can best benefit from services; early intervention when the services are most effective; coordinated services that address the full range of a child's needs; and consistency in the systems of support through the child's development and education. Holding together these aspects of effective services is timely and well-managed information.

In many countries with universal and centrally managed social service programs, universal screening and needs assessments are common at a very early age, in many cases beginning at birth. In the United States, social services are less centralized and care is relatively more individualized. However, there are many programs consistent with national approaches that are effective in identifying needs

and sharing information to facilitate the coordination of services. Research has shown such programs to be efficient and effective in the long term.

In the United States, broad based early screening programs have been found to be effective in helping to manage child abuse[1], infant mental health[2] and autism[3]. Child Find, a national program established under the 1986 Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act to identify preschool children with developmental disabilities, has been widely acknowledged for its success[4]. Within schools, broad based screening has been most commonly applied in the areas of mental and behavioral health, where the connections to school performance are thought to be most direct and screening methods least intrusive[5].

Researchers have noted that a secondary benefit of broad-based screening programs is that they have the potential to reduce the stigma associated with testing and intake. The child is not singled out for evaluation, and so the process is normalized for a given child. The benefits of reducing the stigma associated with testing has been documented in reviews of school-based mental health screening

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[1] Dorota Iwaniec (2006). *The emotionally abused and neglected child: identification, assessment and intervention: a practice handbook*, John Wiley,.

[2] Kathleen Baggett, et al. (2007). "Screening infant mental health indicators: an Early Head Start initiative". *Infants & Young Children*. 20 (4), 300-310.

[3] Linda C Eaves and Helena Ho. (2004). "The very early identification of autism". *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 34 (4), 267-378.

[4] The program is administered locally by Albuquerque Public Schools. http://www.aps.edu/contact-us/directory/location?locid=42l

[5] Ray W. Christner, et al. (2011). Facilitating mental health services in schools: Universal, selected and targeted interventions". In *A Practical Guide to Building Professional Competencies in School Psychology*. Springer. Erin Dowdy, et al. (2010). "School-Based Screening: A Population-Based Approach to Inform and Monitor Children's Mental Health Needs". School Mental Health, 2 (4), 166-176.

programs, especially in preventing suicides among middle and high school students[6].

The initial identification of needs is a critical step in early intervention, but the benefits of early detection can be built upon when the information is used to link the child to the full network of services that s/he may require. Universal applications can be particularly useful in this regard. With a universal application, a child's assessment is made available to a full network of providers, facilitating early identification of other related needs while also providing a basis for service coordination. Again, universal application is more common in centrally managed services systems, but there are instances of their successful application in the United States.

A well known example is UtahClicks.org[7]. By filling out a single online application, a family is notified of all participating services for which they are qualified. In Utah's application, the program is used to connect families to public support programs. But the same idea could be applied to applications for educational service programs, for example linking the family to developmental disability screening, parental literacy programs and the like.

B. <u>Start early</u>

Over the past decade or more, there has been a huge body of research emphasizing the importance of early childhood care to a healthy and successful life. Integral to this growing focus on early childhood are new findings regarding brain development. These findings are summarized in a report published by The Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University:

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[6] Mark D Weist. (2007). "Mental Health Screening in Schools". *Journal of School Health.* Volume 77, Issue 2, pages 53–58.

[7] https://utahclicks.org/uas Utah Clicks is positively reviewed in the November/December 2006 *Newsletter of the Council of State Governments*, 46 (10).

"1. Child development is a foundation of community and economic development as healthy, capable children become the foundation of a prosperous society; 2. Brains are built over time; 3. Genes and parental/caregiver influence literally shape the "architecture" of the developing brain; 4. Brain development and developing abilities are built from the bottom up, that is simple skills along with simple circuits provide the foundation for more advanced skills and advanced circuits as the child grows; 5. Toxic stress (strong, prolonged stress that is not met with adult support …) in early childhood is associated with persistent effects … which can damage a child's brain architecture and lead to lifelong issues with mental and physical health and learning abilities; 6. Addressing early childhood development is likely to have a more lasting effect and is less costly than trying to mitigate negative affects later in life." [8]

One point that requires emphasis is the extent to which "brain architecture" is influenced by the quality of care and support that the child receives. As Bruce Perry, a contributor to the Harvard study puts it: "…*too often adults misinterpret resiliency in children …Children are not resilient, they are in fact malleable.*" [9]

Social service advocates and providers often cite an influential study by James Heckman, 2000 Nobel Prize laureate in Economics, which quantifies the economic impacts – in his terms, returns on investment – of social and educational programs.

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[8] National Scientific Council on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2007). The Science of Early Childhood Development. See related studies by Harvard's Center for the Developing Child at: http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu. Other important sources include: W. Steven Barnett, (1995) "Long-Term Effects of Early Childhood Programs on Cognitive and School Outcomes". The Future of Children. 5(3) 25-50. David W. Brown, et al (2009) "Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Risk of Premature Mortality". American Journal of Preventative Medicine 37(5) 389-396.

[9] Bruce D. Perry, et al (1995) "Childhood Trauma, the Neurobiology of Adaptation, and 'Use-Dependent' Development of the Brain: How 'States' Become 'Traits.'" in Infant Mental Health Journal. 16(4) 271-291.

His conclusion, summarized in the Heckman Equation (see Figure 1) is that investments in early childhood programs average a ten percent return annually, much higher than investments in education and related social programs for older populations. According to Heckman:

> *"Returns are greatest for the very young for two reasons: 1. Younger people have a longer time in which to recoup their investments, and 2. Skill remediation efforts are more effective for younger people because they are more trainable than their older counterparts. An investment strategy that targets the youngest is likely to have a more favorable outcome in the long run."* [10]

Heckman also emphasizes that return on investment in early childhood development and education programs are highest when applied to the most economically disadvantaged families. This argument was thoroughly documented in a widely-referenced 1995 report by Steven Barnett. Barnett examined 36 studies on early childhood programs aimed at low income families, concluding that enrollment in programs such as Head Start and Pre-K

> *"can produce both long and short-term gains in children's cognitive development… as well as sizable and persistent effects on achievement, grade retention, enrollment in special education, high school graduation, and socialization. [The] effects are expected to be largest for the most disadvantaged children."* [11]

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[10] James J. Heckman. (2000). "Policies to Foster Human Capital" in Research in Economics, 54, 3-56.

[11] W. Steven Barnett. (1995). "Long-Term Effects of Early Childhood Programs on Cognitive and School Outcomes." The Future of Children.

FIGURE 1: THE HECKMAN EQUATION[12]
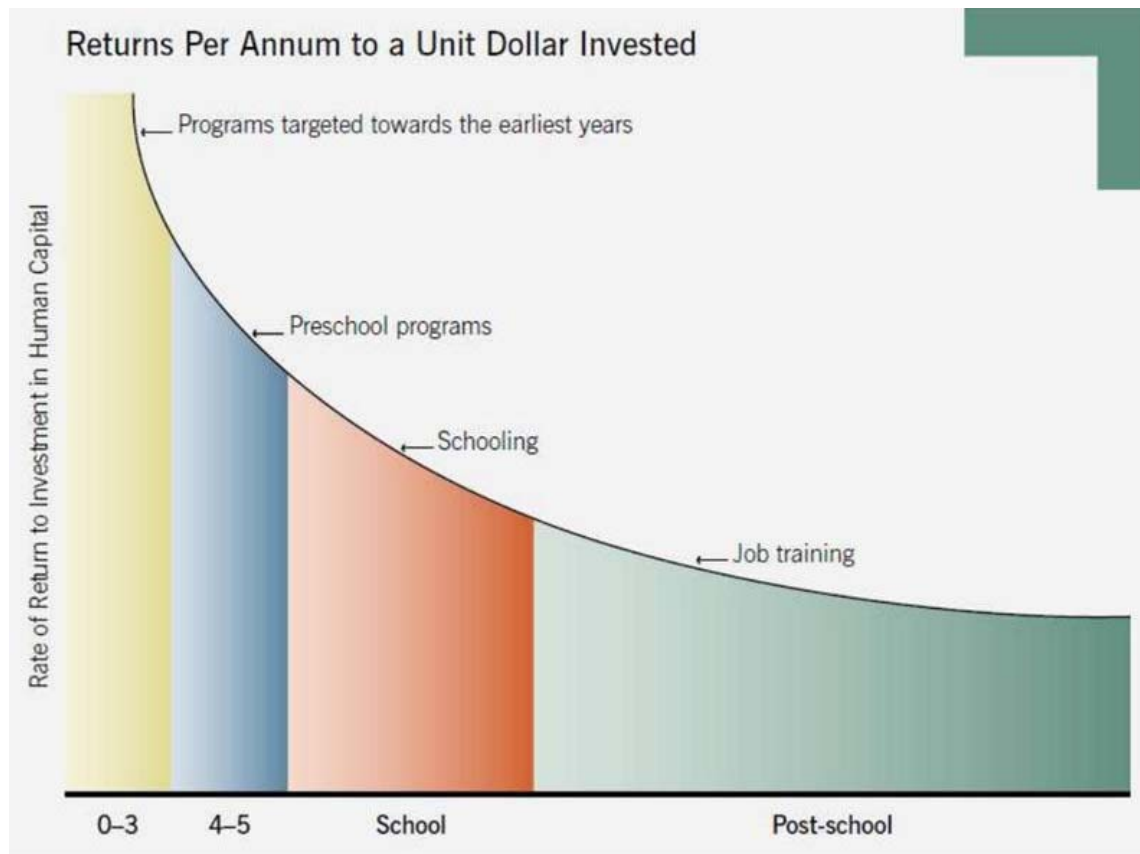
C. Quality counts

There are countless studies documenting the benefits of quality child care services. A 2005 report by Rand Corporation is one of the most thorough. The Rand report reviewed a number of early childhood program evaluations, with an objective of identifying program features associated with positive outcomes for children. The evaluations were selected based on the consistency and rigor of their design and implementation. Rand offered three principal findings:

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[12] http://www.heckmanequation.org/

"First, programs with better-trained caregivers and/or teachers seem to be most effective. In the context of home visiting services, researchers have found stronger positive effects when care and/or services is provided by a trained nurse rather than a paraprofessional or layperson. Second, in the context of center-based programs, there is evidence that smaller child:staff ratios make for more successful programs. Third, there is evidence that more intensive programs lead to better outcomes, but not enough to specify the optimum number of hours a child should spend in a program. Through economic analysis, the researchers also found that effective programs can repay the initial investment." [13]

Another recently published study, draws from a large-scale longitudinal study of more than 3,000 children in 141 pre-school settings in England to examine the effects of pre-school quality on children's cognitive and behavioral outcomes at age 11. The results are sobering.

"Pre-school quality significantly predicted most [social-behavioral and academic] outcomes, after taking account of key child and family factors. More importantly, children who attended low quality pre-schools had cognitive and behavioral scores that were not significantly different from those of children with no pre-school experience." [14]

There are many studies that focus on the importance of the training and professional development of the caregivers and teachers. One widely cited 2002 review of research on the subject concludes plainly:

"[T]he most reliable predictor of home child care quality is the level of caregiver training and/or education in early childhood development/education.

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[13] Lynn A Karoly, et al. (2005). Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise. Rand Corporation. http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG341.html

[14] Kathy Sylva, et al. (2011). "Pre-school quality and educational outcomes at age 11: Low quality has little benefit." *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, June 2011, 9 (2), 109-124.

Analysis of the data finds that caregiver characteristics such as training is a better predictor of quality in home child care than are group size or child:adult ratios." [15]

There is also a great deal of research on specific questions regarding the training and professional development of child care providers. These studies consider what kind of training is most important; how specifically better trained caregivers and teachers perform differently in the setting; differences in terms of specific benefits to children (e.g. behavioral, cognitive, linguistic development) and so on. For example, one study documents the positive impact of better professional training on language acquisition among children enrolled in both center-based and home-based care settings[16]. Another study revealed the capacity of better-educated child care professionals to 'craft' or respond flexibly and creatively in an early educational setting. They also showed that such flexibility is "associated with stronger satisfaction and commitment and, for better teachers, stronger job attachment."[17]

In the final analysis, there remain significant debates as to the advantages and disadvantages of children's enrollment in early childhood programs compared to quality care at home with parents and family. However for many working families full time home care is not a real option. For these families the issue is the quality of the care that the child will receive in center-based and home-based child care centers. On this point, the research is consistent that quality care produces qualitatively different outcomes, and the training and professional development of the caregivers is the single most important feature of quality care.

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[15] Leslie C Philipsen, et al. (1997) "The Prediction of Process Quality from Structural Features of Child Care". *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 12, 281-303.

[16] Susan B Neuman and Linda Cunningham. (2009). "The impact of professional development and coaching on early language and literacy instructional practices". *American Educational Research Journal.*

[17] Carrie Leana, et al. (2009). 'Work and Quality of Care in Early Childhood Education: The Role of Job Crafting." The Academy of Management Journal, 52 (6), 1169-1192.

D. Parent and family engagement

> "*There is no topic in education on which there is greater agreement than the need for family and community involvement.*"[18]

There is a broad consensus that programs to support a child's academic success must engage the 'whole child'. According to the 'whole child' model, children's academic success is linked with their emotional wellness and social and moral development[19]. To nurture the children's development, one must 'rally the whole village[20] – bringing together parents and family, community and role models, health providers and schools in a collective effort to support the child and give value to his or her education.

The 'whole child' approach is relevant to both early childhood development and academic support programs. In early childhood programs, nurturing the whole child means addressing all of the child's needs and involving the entirety of the child's community, including his or her parents and family. In providing services, the 'whole child' approach means deploying what in some specialties is known as 'wrap-around services.' [21] Critical to this approach is coordination, ensuring that services are integrated so that each provider is in tune with the work of others. A case manager is

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[18] Joyce L Epstein, et al. (2009). *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. 3rd Edition. Corwin Press.

[19] The 'whole child' model is most closely associated with Dr. James Comer, a child psychiatrist and the founder of The Comer School Development Program at Yale University. The Comer School Development Program is summarized and reviewed in Dr. Comer's *Six pathways to Healthy Child Development and Academic Success: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*. (2004) Corwin Press.

[20] James Comer (1996). *Rallying the Whole Village: The Comer process for reforming education*. Teachers College Press.

[21] The term 'wrap-around services' was first used by Lenore Behar (1986). "A Model for Child Mental Health Services: The North Carolina Experience". *Children Today* 15(3) 16-21. For a review, see John E. VanDenBerg and Mary E. Grealish. (1996) "Individualized Services and Supports Through the Wraparound Process: Philosophy and Procedures". *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 5(1) 7-21.

integral to the coordination of services, supporting and working alongside the child's caregivers.

Educators emphasize that as the child grows older, academic success continues to depend on the engagement of the family and community. Indeed, the connection between family and community engagement and student success is so critical that researchers have shown that even when involvement is minimal or poorly structured, it still makes a difference to the student and the school's capacity to support the student.[22] Moreover, evidence shows that support is so critical that even when the parent is not directly involved, adults who express an interest in a child's education and hold them accountable for learning can make a difference.[23]

Despite the weight of the research, efforts to increase family and community engagement are too often set aside, waiting for a more convenient time to address them, or otherwise fail to take root. Thus, research has shifted to more practical concerns of why efforts fail and how programs can be made more successful. Although research and debate on these issues continue, there are core points of agreement.[24], [25]

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[22] S. Auerbach. (2007). "From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color". *Urban Education*, 42(3), 250-283.; J. E Glick and B. Hohmann-Marrott. (2007). "Academic performance of young children in immigrant families: The significance of race, ethnicity, and national origins". *International Migration Review*, 41(2), 361-402.

[23] S. R. Beier, et al. (2000). "The potential role of adult mentor in influencing high-risk behaviors in adolescents". *Archive Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 154(4), 327-331.

[24] This discussion is drawn largely from: Chris Ferguson. (2008). *The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture. A Review of Current Literature*. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools.

[25] The SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools has developed a wealth of practical and strategic guides, supported by research, for fostering family engagement in schools. http://www.sedl.org/connections/

- Successful engagement programs must begin by creating a <u>welcoming environment</u> that transcends context, culture and language. This is particularly important – as we will discuss later, in the context of central New Mexico – because adults' own educational experiences and previous involvements vary widely and were not always positive. Also, parents' perceptions about the child's abilities may not align with those of the school. A welcoming environment can enable adults, teachers and school staff to work through these initial challenges.

- Adults and schools must develop a common <u>agreement about what engagement means</u> – when, how, what it looks like. Research has shown that misconceptions about each other's motivations, practices and beliefs can undermine efforts to develop an effective relationship. Thus again, communication that is respectful of each other's experiences is critical, especially as demographic change results in rapid changes in the expectations of both families and schools.

- Programs to foster family/community and school engagement must be <u>continuously refreshed and reinvigorated</u>. This means ongoing procedures to develop new leaders, both within the community and among educators; outreach strategies to recruit and retain families; and initiatives to gather family reactions and perspectives. Efforts have been found to be most successful when they target specific and timely areas of need.

- Successful engagement programs <u>bridge the gap between the child's life at home and in school</u>. This works both ways. While respecting cultural differences within the community, schools and community programs should help to educate the family about opportunities to support their child's academic success. In particular, they should understand: the stages of development of the child and the needs associated with each; the importance of early childhood stimulation to emotional and cognitive development; measures that can be taken to assist in the transition to an academic environment; and perhaps importantly, help the family to appreciate that their efforts to support their child pay off academically and in other aspects of their

life. At the same time, having developed a measure of trust, effective engagement programs enable families to share with schools an understanding of the students' home culture, parenting practices, home crises, and significant family and community events. This enables schools to develop processes and strategies to bridge school-based and home-based activities and increase support for student learning.

E. **Engaging adolescents**

For myriad reasons – from the breakdown of the family, disintegration of neighborhoods, and the narrowing focus of schools on test performance – at-risk middle and high school students often lack a sense of responsibility, purpose, and self-worth. These students feel alienated and disengaged, too often resulting in school dropout. [26]

Although empirical evidence to measure success remains incomplete, dropout prevention programs increasingly focus on strategies to engage students – in the classroom, in school-based programs, and with after-school and community-based programs. There is a huge number of such initiatives, many of them experimental collaboratives established by researchers, educators, youth programs, and community development organizations. These programs tend to draw from a number of common elements:

- Positive in approach – programs emphasize skill building and mastery, building confidence and personal efficacy. This approach can juxtapose with deficit-oriented programs such as pregnancy prevention, gang/violence prevention, conflict resolution. [27]

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[26] According to a 2005 report by ETS, one third of today's students will dropout before completing high school. Paul E. Barton. *One-third of a nation: rising dropout rates and declining opportunities.* ETS; Policy Information Report.

[27] Mark Greenberg, et al. (2003). *Enhancing School-Based Prevention and Youth Development Through Coordinated Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning.* American Psychologist. Vol. 58, No. 6/7, 466–474.

- Voluntary participation – voluntary participation helps to develop a sense of individuality and empowerment; allows the teenager to self-select for activities that appeal to their own interests. [28]

- Relevance – programs that appeal to a teenager's natural interests; that offer an opportunity to make a contribution to one's community and to develop a sense of mattering. [29] Programs that connect learning to future employment and career prospects have been shown to be particularly effective. [30]

- Emphasis on relationships – opportunities to learn how to form close, durable human relationships with peers that support and reinforce healthy behaviors; that develop a sense of belonging and being valued. [31]

- Adult support – opportunities for adolescents to experience positive and supportive adult relationships; to draw associations between academic achievement and success in life and career. [32]

Because the interests of teenagers and the conditions of communities are so varied, the specific structure of these programs also vary widely. Among the most commonly used and best documented approaches is service learning.

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[28] Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton Gootman (Eds.) (2002). *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development Author:* Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. Board on Children, Youth, and Families Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. Washington D.C. National Academies Press.

[29] Jennifer Schmidt, Lee Shumow and Hayal Kackar. (2007) "Adolescents' Participation in Service Activities and Its Impact on Academic, Behavioral, and Civic Outcomes". *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 36: 127–140.

[30] John M. Bridgeland, John J. Dilulio and Karen Burke Morison (2006).

[31] Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton Gootman (Eds.) (2002).

[32] National Mentoring Partnership. Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring. 3rd edition. http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1222.pdf

"Service learning connects community service with the academic curriculum. Effective service learning programs challenge students to reflect on their service experiences through such activities as group discussions and journaling. Typical service learning projects include writing children's books about historical events and then reading them to younger students or painting a mural for the school depicting themes connected to students' learning in science class. Such activities not only promote academic learning but also can help develop students' leadership skills, teach them how to be involved citizens, and give them practice in working with others."

F. <u>Alignment and braiding of funding for schools and communities</u>

Concerns for accountability and measureable impacts have encouraged funders and service providers to focus resources on specific and targeted interventions, such as improved child care services, tutoring and after-school programs. To be sure, many of these initiatives successfully meet their goals. However, the evident failure of these programmatic initiatives to cumulatively alter the prospects of at-risk children and youth has led educators, researchers and policymakers to rethink the overall approach to educational support programs.

System-wide reviews have led many to conclude that it is necessary to move beyond a piecemeal approach to develop broader, better integrated initiatives. New programs emphasizing integration tend to address two interrelated aspects of educational support programming. One focus is on the <u>alignment</u> of programs and services that support children and their caregivers, both in academic and non-academic environments. Another focus is on system-wide <u>braiding</u> of funders, service providers and community organizations to create a system-wide integration of educational support programming, from strategic planning to program sustainability.

Alignment of educational services

As discussed above, the 'whole child' approach is concerned with the balanced development of children in all aspects of their lives, including social and emotional growth as well as academic achievement. Alignment programs extend this notion to the institutions and programs, working to ensure that the programs that engage children are complementary or 'aligned'. Alignment programs have been adopted by school systems, beginning with curriculum alignment. Alignment is applied to community-based educational support programs that work in collaboration with schools, for example after school programs that build upon school-based curriculum[33].

Alignment programs have been used with particular success in coordinating programs that engage children during critical transitional periods. In the best examples, age-appropriate programs and initiatives are established for every stage of the child's development. Along the way, programs are coordinated so that the transition from one life stage to another is as seamless as possible. The Strive Partnership, first developed in Cincinnati with the leadership of the local United Way, is a leading model, aligning services from 'cradle to career. [34]

Recognition of the importance of family and community engagement, and the need to align school and community based programs has given rise to the Community School movement across the United States. According to the Coalition for Community Schools:

> *"A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources with an integrated focus on*

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[33] Seattle School Districts Community Alignment Initiative is a well documented example of such programs. It has been extensively evaluated by the Family Research Project at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. http://www.hfrp.org/

[34] http://www.strivetogether.org/

academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement ... Community schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends."

Community schools often involve partnerships between public school systems and privately funded non-profit initiatives. The model remains very flexible, with different communities adopting some or other aspects of the entire program. Organizations leading the development of community schools include the Coalition for Community Schools, [35] the National Center for Community Schools, [36] and Communities in Schools. [37] In Albuquerque, the Community Schools movement is led by the ABC Community Schools Partnership, formed by a joint powers agreement between the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and Albuquerque Public Schools, with participation of United Way of Central New Mexico and the New Mexico Community Foundation. [38]

A highly regarded community school program is the School of the 21st Century, a national model developed at Yale University and first implemented in 1998 in Independence, Missouri.[39] The components of the 21st Century model are guidance and support for parents, early care and education, before and after-school programs, health education and services, networks and training for child care providers, and

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[35] The Coalition is a national alliance engaged in advocacy, program development, training, and funding to programs across the county. http://www.communityschools.org/

[36] The National Center for Community Schools was established by the Children's Aids Society based on community school programs in New York City.
http://nationalcenterforcommunityschools.childrensaidsociety.org/

[37] Communities in Schools works within public school systems, establishing relationships businesses and community organizations to provide resources to support the academic success of students.
http://www.communitiesinschools.org/

[38] http://www.neighborhoodplanning.org/pdf/R-73fin-att.pdf

[39] http://www.yale.edu/21c/index2.html

information and referral services. There are currently over 1,300 21st Century Schools across the United States.

Community school strategies have been applied to much broader objectives, including community and economic development. The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), one of the best known and most ambitious examples, works to provide child and educational support and programming within the broader embrace of community development[40]. The central idea behind HCZ is that children's academic success can only occur within a healthy and supportive community, with active and engaged families, and that a community's engagement with its children can be a catalyst for community development. At the core of the HCZ initiative is the development of a 'pipeline of services' to support students and their families 'from cradle to college'[41]. The considerable attention received by HCZ has led to the establishment of dozens of similar programs in other communities in the United States[42].

Partnerships for collective impact

Alignment programs have been credited with extending the reach of narrow and targeted programs to integrate multiple programs and services. But advocates and policymakers are increasingly interested in developing initiatives that are both scalable and sustainable. This requires partnerships to not only align programs and services but to more broadly bring together funders, governments, businesses, service providers and communities in an effort to affect system-wide change.

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[40] Harlem Children's Zone was featured in documentary "Waiting for Superman." It was also the subject of Paul Tough's *Whatever it takes: Geoffrey Canada's quest to change Harlem and America*. . (2008) Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

[41] http://www.hcz.org/

[42] A 2010 study issued by the Brookings Institution questions some of the claims made about the Harlem Children's Zone. The report confirms HCZ's success in achieving its academic objectives, but questions whether the broader community and economic development initiatives played any role in this success.
http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/rc/reports/2010/0720_hcz_whitehurst/0720_hcz_whitehurst.pdf

An article recently published by *The Stanford Social Innovation Review* outlines conditions for what the authors call 'collective impact.' [43] The term collective impact is used to distinguish broad and systematic initiatives from 'isolated impacts', "an *approach oriented toward finding and funding a solution embodied within a single organization, combined with the hope that the most effective organizations will grow or replicate to extend their impact more widely*." The authors identify five conditions for collective success:

- Common agenda – a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. Funders can play an important role in getting organizations to act in concert by aligning support for central goals.

- Shared measurement system – a common means of evaluation to ensure that all efforts remain aligned, enabling participants to hold each other accountable and learn from each other's success and failures.

- Mutually reinforcing activities – not a requirement that participants do the same thing, but incentives to ensure that their differentiated activities fit within a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

- Continuous communication – frequent and regular meetings among high level representatives of the participating organization not only to reach consensus on the agenda and plan but more fundamentally to develop trust.

- Backbone support organizations – coordination takes time and effort, requiring an organization with a skilled staff whose sole objective is to promote the common agenda. "*The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails*."

[43] John Kania and Mark Kramer. (Winter 2011). "Collective Impact" *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. http://www.wkkflearninglabs.org/upload_main/docs/wa_conf/readings/collective_impact.pdf

Kania and Kramer use the Strive Partnership as the example for the model of collective action. They note, for example, that The Greater Cincinnati Foundation realigned its education goals to be more compatible with Strive, adopting Strive's annual report card as the foundation's own measure for progress in education. They underline that Strive does not prescribe what activities the 300 participating organizations should undertake, only that they must be consistent with the common goals and informed by shared measurements. They emphasize the very significant commitment of time by leadership and their dependence on their core – but slimmed down – backbone organization.

Although Strive has effectively advanced improving educational outcomes in greater Cincinnati, they have struggled to raise funding. An earlier article by the authors, "Catalytic Philanthropy"[44], anticipates the financing challenges given that collective impacts unfold over time and that funders often have shorter term perspectives. But the earlier article emphasizes that at a minimum 'catalytic philanthropy' must initiate, creating "a movement for change".

Addressing the challenges of financing long term initiatives such as Strive or 21st Century Schools is the focus of the work of The Finance Project, a Washington-based non-profit whose mission is to "develop sound financing strategies, and build solid partnerships that benefit children, families and communities." [45] In The Finance Project's vocabulary, sustainable funding for childhood and educational programs is the result of 'blending and braiding funds.' The core argument is that integrated and collaborative initiatives often depend on 'categorical funding', targeted to specific objectives and programs. Sustainability requires that programs be blended in a way

[44] Mark Kramer (Fall 2009). "Catalytic Philanthropy". *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. http://www.coloradofunders.org/Docs/UploadedFiles/Catalytic%20Philanthropy%20-%20Kramer.pdf
[45] http://www.financeproject.org/

that can draw from multiple pools of categorical funding; a 'braiding' of funding sources. [46] They further noted that sustainability is made possible by: [47]

- Involving service organizations that are individually able to draw on outside funding sources.

- Maintaining high quality programs and documenting outcomes to gain advantages in applying for funding.

- Working closely with public organizations, including public school systems.

- Developing champions within the community for specific issues and programs, helping to raise public awareness and leverage new sources of funding.

- Engaging the community in support of programs and initiatives, for example using events and activities that help to make the program more visible in the community.

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[46] Margaret Flynn and Cheryl D. Hayes. (2003). *Blending and Braiding Funds to Support Early Care and Education Initiatives*. The Finance Project.
http://www.financeproject.org/publications/Sustaining_21cclc_exsum.pdf
Torey Silloway. (2010). *Building capacity for better results: Strategies for financing and sustaining the organizational capacity of youth-service programs*. The Finance Project.
http://www.financeproject.org/publications/BuildingCapacity-Brief.pdf
[47] Amanda Szekely and Heather Clapp Padgette. (2006). *Sustaining 21st Century Community Learning Centers: What works for programs and how policymakers can help*. The Finance Project.
http://www.financeproject.org/publications/sustaining_21cclc.pdf

3. LOCAL PERSPECTIVES – DISCUSSIONS WITH CENTRAL NEW MEXICO'S LEADERS IN CHILD AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

The second part of this study involved interviews with individuals and representatives of key institutions working locally in the fields of education and educational-support services. The purpose of the interviews was to identify and understand the conditions and practices of families and service organizations in the four county area; and to assess barriers to the implementation of 'best practices' described above. The selection of those interviewed and the structure of the interviews was not intended to provide a scientific random survey of conditions and practices. Rather, the approach utilized a 'key informant' methodology –loosely structured conversations with a number of individuals with in-depth knowledge of the issues under study[48].

A. <u>Interview participants</u>

BBER conducted interviews with 89 individuals involved in education and child support services throughout the four county area. Several of those interviewed were identified in the course of preliminary discussions and a review of professional boards and advisory committees as state or regional leaders in the areas of education, child development and/or child support services. Individuals were selected from each of the four counties included in this study. In the course of each interview, individuals were asked to identify others in their field or region with whom

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[48] There were two reasons for the use of a 'key informant' approach rather than a scientific (random) survey. First, the cost of conducting a comprehensive survey covering such a broad range of issues was beyond the means available for the study. Second and perhaps more importantly, a survey approach is intended to capture the perceptions of the subject by the population represented by the participants in the study. By contrast, key informant approach is intended to get beyond perceptions of the issues to a more in-depth or detailed understanding of the issues by those whom we assume – accurately or otherwise – to have the valuable expertise and relevant first-hand knowledge.

they thought we should speak, leading to subsequent interviews. This approach to participant selection – know as 'snowball sampling' – allows not only identification of well-informed individuals but an understanding of the structure of local networks of professional communication and collaboration. In all interviews, participants were assured that s/he would not be directly associated with their comments, providing a measure of confidentiality that encouraged a frank and open discussion of the issues. The participants were quoted as closely as notes would allow; in some cases, statements are paraphrased.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of participants according to their institutional affiliations. About 45 percent of those interviewed worked within the school systems[49]. Two thirds of these were in school administration (including superintendents, principals and program administrators) and one third worked in school-based health or social service provision. Roughly another 45 percent of those we spoke with worked with community-based organizations. One third of these individuals worked in service provision and another two thirds worked in the areas of policy and advocacy. Half of the remaining roughly ten percent of interviewees worked at colleges or universities, as researchers in the areas of education and child development practice and policy and the final roughly five percent worked in state and local government in positions relevant to education and child services. The individuals interviewed were primarily chosen according to their role in either education, or in the community, or by the prominence of their efforts as community or education activists.

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[49] The four county service area includes 10 school systems – Albuquerque, Belen, Bernalillo, Cuba, Estancia, Jemez Valley, Los Lunas, Moriarty, Mountainair, Rio Rancho – as well as the Bureau of Indian Education schools. Representatives of 10 of these systems participated in these interviews.

FIGURE 2: PARTICIPATION ACCORDING TO INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION
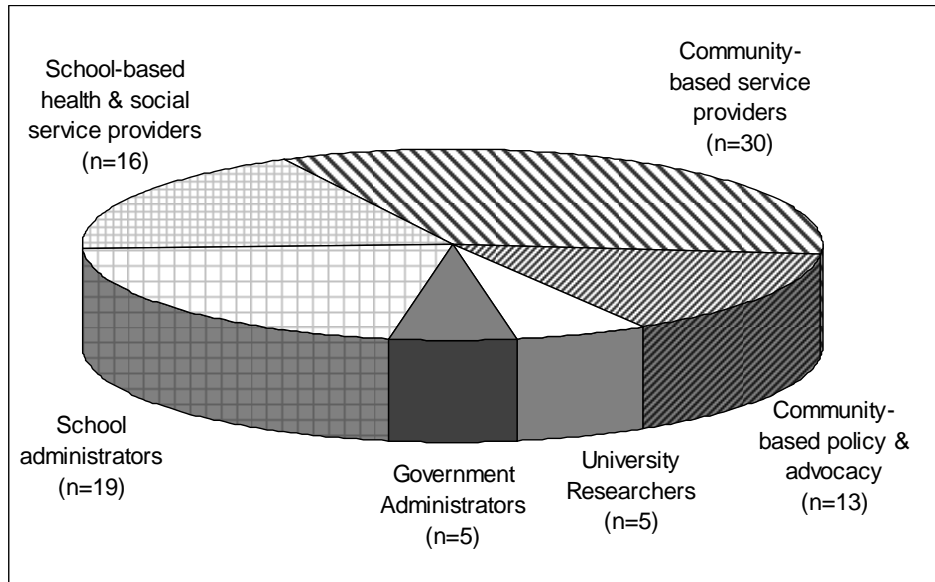
Figure 3 shows the distribution of participants by county. Three-quarters of those interviewed either worked in or were most familiar with the challenges of educational support services in urban areas (including Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, and Los Lunas) and the remaining one-quarter focused on the challenges faced by those in the rural areas of the four counties (including northern Sandoval County, eastern and southern Valencia County and all of Torrance County).

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTY
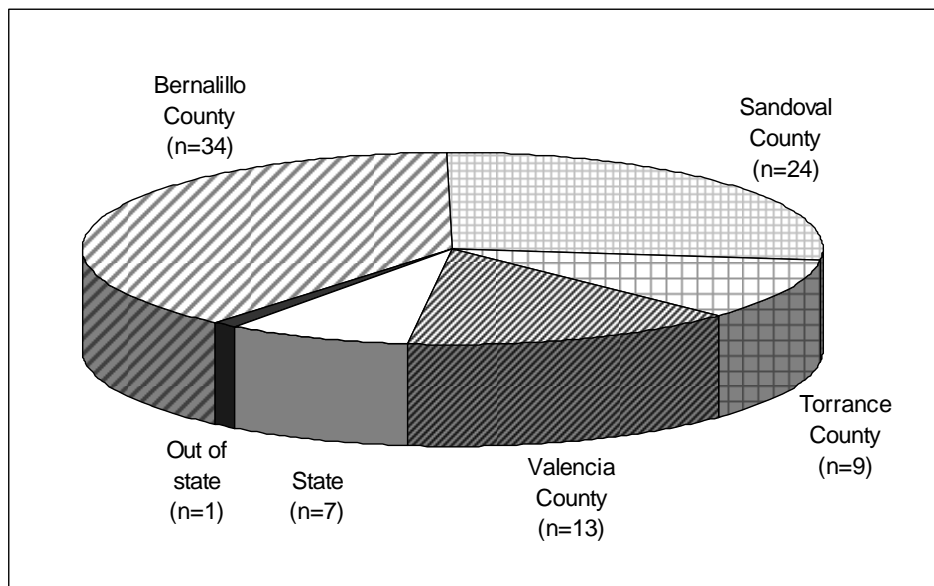
B. Interview topics

The interviewees were asked to offer information and insights in three areas:

- A description of the work in which the interviewee is engaged – what is the nature of the work, the population with which s/he works, strategy or approach in his or her work.

- A description of the major issues (challenges, needs) faced by students, families, and/or providers in their geographic area and their area of expertise.

- Based on their experience, recommended solutions to the problems described above.

Interviews were open ended – the interviewees were offered the opportunity to define the issues in their own terms and to provide the analysis that s/he felt appropriate. Follow-up questions were asked for clarification. In some cases, interviewees were asked to respond to comments made by other interviewees.

Interviews generally ran between an hour and an hour and a half, allowing each person interviewed plenty of time to share his or her perspective.

C. <u>Findings</u>

Although those interviewed were engaged in a number of different professional activities, and worked in very different institutional and geographical settings, there was fundamental agreement on two broad and fundamental points:

- There was a broad consensus in agreement with the best practices described above – effective intervention should engage the child, the family and the community; services should be individualized, consistent and integrated; programs and services should be anchored in and relevant to everyday experiences of students and their families; and intervention should begin as early as possible (at birth or even prenatal) and continue through the completion of schooling.

- There was broad agreement regarding challenges or barriers to the effective implementation of these best practices, namely, that the systems of needs assessment and service provision are hit-and-miss and overly complex. This undermines the capacity of both families and service organizations to identify needs and access and coordinate services. This complexity is the result of a system-wide structure that lacks adequate information and oversight at the highest levels and tends to reward differentiation and discourage collaboration.

The following discussion of the observations and analyses offered by the interviewees is organized according to three perspectives or 'levels of analysis': (1) that of the family in need of services; (2) that of the professional organization with the mission to provide services; and (3) that of analysts and administrators of educational support system as a whole. Note that these three perspectives or levels of analysis refer to specific comments and not necessarily the situation of the person

offering the comment. For example, a community-based child healthcare provider may offer very insightful commentary regarding the difficulties faced by both families and provider organizations; policy analysts may likewise provide very useful comments on the effectiveness of the educational support system as a whole, basing these comments on an understanding of the perspectives of both service providers and families.

D. <u>Challenges faced by families and students</u>

Many parents fail to recognize the importance of educational achievement and/or do not associate early childhood development with later educational success, placing the child at a disadvantage.

By all accounts, the engagement and support of parents in a child's physical, intellectual and emotional development is a critical factor in a child's academic success. However, many of those interviewed for this study noted that in many cases parents and caregivers are either unaware of the developmental processes of children and/or do not recognize the need for the tools and resources to support their children during early development and as they progress through school. This is fundamental – a parent who is unaware of the developmental needs of their child cannot be engaged and cannot act as an effective advocate for their child. In the words of one Head Start administrator:

> *"If parents don't understand how valuable early childhood education is they don't seek it out. If they don't understand how important internet access is, they won't advocate for it."*

Another factor that works against the engagement of parents in their child's education is that parents themselves may have had unpleasant experiences in their own educational histories, creating a negative perception of the school system that carries over into adulthood and affects their ability to advocate for the interests of their children. This factor has an effect of carrying a legacy of educational underachievement across generations. In the words of one elementary school

principal,

> *"Parents often did not grow up with a sense of trust and safety with the teachers at their school and they maintain this distrust into adulthood. We need to work to help parents feel more comfortable on campus."*

A third factor is that, in some contexts, families may perceive the educational success of the children to be a threat to family structure and traditional culture. This is perhaps more likely to manifest in rural areas, where traditional cultures have deeper roots and alternative systems of family and social support are less well developed. One school administrator working in Sandoval County described this dynamic stating:

> *"Cultural expectations are an issue: The school district is trying to get kids ready for college and the broader job market while tribes are preparing kids to stay close to home in rural areas and around pueblos. How do we meet cultural desires for community cohesion while making sure kids are properly prepared?"*

Although these situations are not uncommon, many of those interviewed were quick to acknowledge that many, even most parents are mindful of their children's development, do value their educational success, and recognize that their engagement in their children's education is critical to that success. Instead, they argue that economic stress is the most important factor limiting the engagement of parents in their children's education. The problem, of course, disproportionately affects children of lower-income and single-parent households. Parents in these households spend more time and energy at work, commuting to work, and performing the other tasks required of them. These parents are often less available to help with homework and to shuttle kids to and from extracurricular activities.

A related factor commonly cited is that with parents away at work and engaged in other activities, households rely more heavily on their children to perform work around the house, from cleaning and preparing dinner to caring for younger siblings.

As kids get older, they may become income providers for the household. This set of circumstances leaves children with less support and/or less time to devote to academic enrichment outside of school hours. One high school councilor relayed that an after school tutoring program was lightly attended because, as many students commented, their parents relied on the income from their after school jobs.

Caregivers, particularly those with children most at-risk, often find access to services prohibitively complex and/or socially stigmatizing or unwelcoming.

Those interviewed, particularly community-based service providers, suggest that complexities of service access cause parents and caregivers to wait too long and to address issues on a piecemeal basis. Thus, intervention can be only partially effective, as it fails to address underlying issues that are by this time well advanced. To illustrate, one community-based service provider comments:

> *"Families come in needing help with a utility bill, but that is always the tip of the iceberg. The problem is that we can only help with that one problem and they're on their own in going to others for help with their other problems."*

The difficulty of dealing with only one problem at time, whether that problem is specific to the developmental and educational needs of the child or is general to the needs of the household, quickly becomes overwhelming. As the family moves from one problem to the next, they only get/fall further and further behind.

 Interviewees working with minority and especially rural populations note that these populations face additional challenges, both practical and cultural. Those not proficient in English face the obvious difficulty of language barriers. Families with undocumented members feel still more threatened that accessing services may subject them to a loss of services and even deportation.

However, many of those with whom we spoke note subtler but equally important

social and cultural dynamics that dissuade families from seeking support. For instance, some families and individuals are simply unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the institutional context surrounding services: those in need of services perceive the provider institutions as bureaucratic and unwelcoming. Another social/cultural barrier is that individuals and families may fear being ostracized by others within their own community because accessing services may be perceived as evidence of a personal failure. For example, one school administrator described the difficulties of getting students struggling with food security to take home weekend food supplies because of the students' fears of being shamed by their classmates.

Another example was offered by a program administrator struggling to increase program enrollment, even where a family's ability to pay or access public assistance was not a factor. A particular difficulty that the program faced was a perception within impoverished communities that participation would be seen by other community members to be a sign of personal failure, and that the family would be stigmatized as a result. The program has worked hard to reframe its image to be more inclusive, minimizing such concerns among families.

A third barrier regards perceived differences between providers and those in need of services. An example of this is racial or class difference. An account was given in which a school population was almost entirely of one ethnic group while the school staff was largely of another. A stated concern by interviewees working in the district was that the school system had a low assessment of capabilities and therefore limited expectations of the student population, though they were not certain that the low expectations of the schools were specifically due to racial/ethnic considerations. Another, perhaps more common example involved perceived differences between a population in need of services and 'outsiders' providing services. In areas with a strong sense of shared history and community, the trust that is integral to effective social services is difficult to cultivate with providers who provide only occasional services. Representatives working in each of the three rural counties mentioned the difficulty of local residents developing trust and confidence in providers based in

Albuquerque, who have no significant presence in their community.

Middle and high school students often disengage from school studies because they do not see academic success as relevant to their personal interests and social lives.

Educators and researchers interviewed for this study note that middle school marks a critical moment of transition for many students. As teenagers undergoing difficult changes in their intellectual, emotional and social development, they confront a desire to establish an individual identity independent of their parents and other figures of authority. Parents and school structures cede that independence directly and indirectly, but during this important period it is more important than ever that new structures arise to lend the adolescent support. For at-risk youth, these structures are often not available.

In middle school, students experience the new practices of changing classrooms and teachers during the school day, which decreases the familiarity and continuity to which students were accustomed during elementary school. As a result, students begin to lose the focused and direct support of the classroom teacher, creating the potential for a sense of alienation in the classroom. At home, with the adolescents' desire for independence, parents' engagement with their child and their school often changes significantly. In the words of one university-level education expert:

> *"Parents (of middle and high school students) disengage – they feel their kids don't need them anymore and middle school kids are inclined to discourage their parents from being involved."*

During this period, students look for new sources of support from peers, mentors and their community. However, as educators and community leaders from central New Mexico note, there are scarce resources available to assist the youth in this transition. Several educators note that educational content is too narrowly limited to the classroom, with less and less relevance to the personal lives of middle and high school students, both as individuals and members of the community. Ultimately, as

one high school councilor in Albuquerque states:

> *"When kids aren't known in their school and aren't involved in their community, they don't feel that their lives have much relevance."*

The limitations of the classroom experience are most constraining to at-risk students from families and communities without the resources to support new relationships. Further, at-risk students are often without parental figures or mentors who have graduated from high school or attended college and now have jobs that require a strong educational background. Thus, in the words of a local drop-out prevention advocate,

> *"Without mentorship by someone of a similar background, graduating high school and going to college seems like something for someone else - not for them."*

In all, during this critical period of transition, at-risk students experience a withdrawal of parental involvement, few supports to establish positive relations in the community and no clear association between educational success and future opportunities. Instead, these students face increasing pressures to meet short-term goals, related both to the economic needs of themselves and their families and the social needs to establish an identity within their community.

Families face very different barriers in accessing services in urban and the rural areas, yet programs are often not structured to address these specific issues.

Families in urban areas tend to face issues generally discussed throughout this document – those related to an understanding and familiarity with needs and services, and the complexity of systems of service delivery. In the rural areas of the four county region, families face additional impediments to access. These challenges relate to geographical and cultural isolation and the lack of economies of scale to justify the presence of needed services and structures.

Distance and the availability and cost of transportation are major factors constraining access to services in rural communities. These transportation challenges affect most aspects of life. Jobs are often clustered in areas distant from residential centers. Some lower order services can be found in rural villages, but others are available only in more distant urban centers such as Los Lunas and Albuquerque. Even groceries are scarcely available, and fresh foods are difficult to come by.

Regarding critical social and educational support services, the problem is double-edged. To justify services, providers must locate centrally within an area large enough to capture a population sufficient in scale to cover costs. However, the large service area means that families must travel great distances to access service. Thus, families are forced to limit their trips, and providers are forced to further reduce their services. An example offered by a rural school administrator of the challenges of maintaining an after-school tutoring program perfectly captures the dynamic:

> *"The district had a grant to provide an after-school program, but they did not have money in the budget to provide a second round of buses for kids which caused a sufficient challenge for families. The limited participation did not warrant the continuation of the program."*

Another school administrator described her challenges in offering extracurricular activities saying,

> *"Everyone is very spread out so it is difficult to get kids together. There are 500 kids in a district that covers 1,000 square miles."*

In the end, the problem is one of system capacity. In the words of one rural Head Start administrator,

> *"I've got all these referrals and nowhere to send them."*

The effect of isolation is heightened by poor communication networks. Several

interviewees from northern Sandoval County and Torrance County note that broadband internet is unavailable to most residences, and many libraries, which do have internet access, have limited hours because of budget cuts. Schools and libraries in many of the rural areas are also said to be underequipped with computers. Limited access to the internet, shortened library hours, and large family households make it difficult for students to complete their homework. As one community advocate puts it,

> *"The internet technology gap is a major disadvantage – same as not having a telephone used to be."*

E. Challenges faced by service providers

Service providers often lack a systematic approach to the identification of individuals and populations most in need of services.

It was mentioned by many service providers that in central New Mexico (perhaps in all parts of New Mexico) there is no system of early and universal enrollment in programs to monitor and support a child's early development. Even with enrollment in public schools, there is no comprehensive screening for developmental issues or other problems that may interfere with a child's educational success. The problem is one of early detection and the sharing of information among the many service providers.

The lack of early detection limits early intervention, which by all accounts is most effective. For example, developmental issues diagnosed early can often be effectively addressed, either by correcting the underlying cause or by learning to manage the issue before it impedes later stages of development. Beyond the obvious benefits to the child, early intervention is also cost effective as it minimizes the costly treatment of 'downstream' issues that only multiply over time. The failure to collect and share information also compromises the quality of services and, again,

increases their costs. Developmental issues and other problems affecting a child's academic success typically do not occur in isolation. Without an effective system to share information regarding a child's progress, issues related to the initial diagnosis often go unaddressed or, if addressed, require considerable investments in evaluative procedures.

Lacking universal enrollment and monitoring in central New Mexico, services often fail to reach the children and families most at risk. In the highly complex system currently in place, only those with skills and resources are likely to recognize the need and succeed in accessing services. Those facing the direst challenges typically lack these skills and resources. Thus, those receiving services are not necessarily those in the greatest need.

Universal enrollment has an additional benefit – referenced above – in that it helps to minimize the stigma associated with requesting and receiving services. Social and cultural factors often discourage families from soliciting services, as they may be seen as suggesting an individual or family failure. With universal assessment, the process is 'normalized' – the child or family being evaluated is no different than any other. As one school superintendent stated (paraphrased):

> *"Barriers to efficient utilization of resources include communication, red tape, shame and unwillingness, or stigma. Community schools are a great idea because the school belongs to the community, which makes it a great resource site – schools have an obligation toward the safety and security of children and being involved in a community requires a freedom from fear."*

Funding mechanisms tend to encourage providers to differentiate ('silo') rather than collaborate.

The differentiation and siloing of services is in many regards the hub of the current system of educational support services and the source of many of its greatest inefficiencies. The issue is by no means below the radar of those with whom we spoke – to the same extent that those interviewed emphasized the importance of the

'whole child' approach and the need for 'wrap-around' services, they also identified service differentiation and siloing as the main impediment. There were, however, at least three different explanations as to why differentiation and siloing occur.

Professional training

The first explanation regarded professional training and associated perspectives. Healthcare professionals are naturally inclined to approach the challenges of children and families from a health-oriented perspective; social service providers are likely to weigh the importance of social and economic issues; educational professionals are inclined to define problems according to educational challenges and standards. Each of these perspectives is valid and understandable, but the proclivity of each group to focus on issues defined by their perception while minimizing those of the others undermines the possibilities for collaboration.

Examples abound. On the widest ground, there is an almost unchallenged consensus that the most effective long-term strategy to reverse the trends in child development and school success is to give new focus to early childhood. But the consensus ends there. For health professionals, the specific focus is on health-related issues: healthy pregnancy, nutrition, monitoring early stages of child development, environmental health, and so on. For social service providers, the central concern is the quality of the child's environment, with informed and engaged parents, child protective services, positive role models, and so on. For educational professionals, early childhood programs must emphasize early exposure and development of academically useful skills, such as developing concentration, being exposed to reading, music and other age-appropriate stimuli. While service providers are aware of the importance of meeting needs beyond the purview of any individual sector, professional training makes one more mindful of a given approach and may even cause providers to reframe other perspectives in a way that is consistent with their own.

A more specific example we came across in the interview process regards the

application of increasingly popular home-visitation programs. As noted, these programs are designed to give new parents support. However, there is significant disagreement as to who, specifically, should provide the support. According to some, nurses are uniquely qualified as they are widely respected, understand important health issues, can assist in monitoring a child's development, and offer many resources due to their training. According to others, social workers are best qualified as they are most sensitive to the social and familial conditions that shape a child's growth and development. Still others emphasize the role of parent-to-parent supports, arguing that it is most welcoming, builds on existing relationships, and holds open the door to community support and resources. Again, while the effectiveness of some approaches are better documented, each has its unique advantages.

Institutional isolation

Providers work within institutions with their own procedures, their own individual performance standards, their own schedules, and their own workplace cultures. Most providers work in institutions with tight budgets, unwieldy case loads and limited time available to extend beyond their required assignments. Even where inclined, time and resources are seldom available to learn the perspectives of other professionals and organizations and to manage and coordinate with providers of other services. Collaboration further complicates program assessment because a provider is less able to evaluate the benefits of other forms of intervention. Indeed, only case managers with specific responsibility to coordinate services have any incentive to undertake these tasks. However, with fewer resources available and with funders focused on the provision of specific services, dedicated funding for case managers has declined.

Institutional boundaries and impediments to collaboration are by no means limited to relations between community based organizations (CBOs). More problematic are boundaries that divide CBOs and public school systems. Strict procedures, complex bureaucratic structures, concerns for liability and many other factors constrain public

school systems from working collaboratively with CBOs. In many cases, the constraints can be so great, so binding, that the very possibility is obscured. School officials may be reluctant to even explore opportunities, or even worse work in near complete isolation of non-school based environments. One school administrator explained:

> *"We don't have much sense of what services are out in the community and we could do a better job if we were better able to refer out and collaborate with community organizations."*

Although by no means common, a second example illustrates the gulf that sometimes separates schools from the communities within which they work. A superintendent of a local school district spoke with us in remarkable detail about the many recent efforts undertaken by the district to create educational-support programs for students. However, when asked, this superintendent was unable to identify a single program undertaken by local CBOs in support of children and indeed, was unable to identify a single person outside the schools with whom we should speak. Later discussions with other community representatives indicated that there were, in fact, a number of initiatives in support of local students, though admittedly all had their problems.

Funding dynamics

The exigencies of funding may be the greatest factor working against collaboration and the coordination of educational support services. Any organization or service provider applying for funding, whether for profit or not for profit, must directly or indirectly argue that their service is unique from those of other providers. They must also argue that their service is somehow more effective – that it yields a greater return on the funder's investment than services offered by other organizations. The logic is not unlike that of businesses and institutions working in other areas – to keep its doors open and to even grow an organization must differentiate its services or find its niche within the market.

In the final analysis, this creates an environment more conducive to competition than to collaboration. The result is a siloing of services that nearly all identify as the single greatest impediment to improved services. In the words of one community advocate,

> *"We don't have a good way of holding adults in the service and education sectors accountable. How do we create a structure and keep people collaborating within that structure and not warring over turf?"*

Although many of those we interviewed spoke harshly about the harmful effects of the siloing of services on the quality of support provided to children and families, only with regard to some school systems did these arguments target any specific organization. Further, when asked to explain the tendency for siloed services, explanations nearly always returned systematic factors – the demands of funding, professional bias, and the pressure of overwhelming caseloads on individuals and organizations. There were very few, if any, cases in which a failure to collaborate was explained in terms of biases or any other qualities unique to a given organization.

Many providers in central New Mexico, especially those working in early childhood services, find it difficult to recruit and retain a qualified workforce.

According to many working in the area of early childhood services, there is a very certain hierarchy within the educational and support service labor force. Moving from childcare services provided to the very young, to Head Start programs, to pre-kindergarten programs, and into K-12 public schools, requirements for training and certification become more rigorous. With increased demands for training and certification come higher pay rates, sometimes mandated by public regulation. To offset costs and to justify personal investments in one's training and certification, teachers and service providers move through a hierarchy to increase their pay and gain greater professional standing. As a result, educators with more skills, training, and seniority, gravitate towards teaching higher grades. This leaves behind a pool of

early childhood educators with less experience and training. The situation is made worse by the low professional standards that New Mexico holds for childcare providers, requiring little more than a high school degree and a clear criminal record to begin.

A consequence of this dynamic is that providers of early childhood services are challenged to attract, develop and retain a qualified workforce. According to an official with the New Mexico Child Care and Education Association (NMCCEA), the turnover rate for childcare workers in New Mexico exceeds 33 percent per year. An unfortunate consequence of the high level of turnover is that organizations working at the low rungs of the hierarchy are faced with a strong disincentive to invest in the training of their staff – supporting the advancement of an employee's education only encourages the employee to move on.

A secondary consequence of this hierarchy for childcare providers is that it impedes the development of a strong sense of professionalism among those who work in the lower rungs of the system. They earn low pay; they are inexperienced; and they are yet to establish strong relationships with each other and with professional organizations. Without a strong sense of professional identity those working in the field are not strong advocates for early childhood programs. This stands in contrast with the strong commitment and advocacy of New Mexico's K-12 educators.

F. <u>System-wide challenges</u>

 The difficulties faced by children and families as well as providers of educational support services in central New Mexico center on the identification of needs, the access to and coordination of services, and most broadly, a sense of ownership and possibility. The difficulties are aspects of much larger system-wide inefficiencies in the areas of a) the quality and flow of information, b) the allocation and coordination of resources, and c) opportunities for community participation, advocacy and change. While families and service providers must be part of any effort to address these system-wide issues, it will ultimately require participation and leadership of

senior administrators and funders.

The collection and analysis of information is undervalued in educational support services in central New Mexico.

Information is the key factor in ensuring that resources are efficiently allocated, resulting in the best possible outcomes. There were four key issues identified by those interviewed in regard to information: early and universal screening and assessment; systems that allow information to 'follow' a child through his or her education; data for program evaluation; and strategic information necessary for long-term planning.

Early and universal screening and assessment

Early and universal screening helps to ensure that interventions occur early, when they are most effective; that services reach those most at-risk; and the stigma of assessment is minimized, encouraging participation.

Alignment data

In reviewing best practices, we discussed the importance of service alignment. In brief, during the course of a child's development and education s/he passes through critical periods of transition – into early childcare or child development programs; into early Head Start or Head Start; into pre-K; into elementary school; into middle-school; and finally into high school. In this context, program alignment is meant to ensure the consistency of services for an individual child and/or for a group of children. A particular concern is that during these moments of transition, as a child moves between institutions, there is a risk that information about a child's progress, his or her challenges and needs, the programs that s/he has received, and so on, maybe lost or not passed along. The problem is especially acute for children of homeless or transient families, where children move frequently between schools and programs.

Those interviewed note that while most public school systems have at least a

rudimentary system to support the flow of information, systems do not exist in New Mexico to facilitate the sharing of information among pre-school programs and between community-based providers and public school systems. In some cases, the problem is the 'human factor' (individuals are more or less effective communicators, move between jobs and so forth); in other cases, the problems are institutional. As one nonprofit director stated:

> *"There are random factors at all levels that impede communication and smooth coordination – each program has unique standards and requirements; some services are available, others not; individual case managers come and go, some with more or less experience, and knowledge of specific cases. So the difficulties range from the individual case workers, inter-organization, intra-organization, and also systemic."*

In the words of a researcher and policy analyst:

> *"Creating a dataset of at-risk children, and using that to create a referral service to pull in the service providers would be a giant step forward. Just mapping the institution – creating a database of who is out there, who is doing what, and who is effective – would be a great contribution."*

Program evaluation

Several of those interviewed, working in different contexts, expressed concern that resources and standards in the region are not adequate to support quality program evaluation.

The explanations offered vary. University researchers, policy analysts and funders typically argue that program administrators fail to understand the importance of information collection, and note that the poor quality of program-specific data provides no basis for informed decisions about the efficacy of various programs. Many program administrators see it differently, noting that funders require extensive data collection for continued funding, but are typically unwilling to fund data collection. There is a more general agreement that there is a need to establish

agreed-upon standards for measurement and evaluation, and that without better data standards New Mexico is at a disadvantage in competing for national and federal monies. One senior program administrator noted:

> *"When you first apply for federal dollars, just showing that there is need is enough. But to keep the money flowing you have to prove that your program is effective. That's much harder, and we don't have the manpower to collect all the information that they want."*

Another concern, reflected in various parts of the study, is the differences in capacities in urban and rural areas of the four county region. A senior school administrator in a rural district noted:

> *"How can we compete with Albuquerque? APS is so big that they have people who do nothing but collect data and write grants. That's impossible here. If we want to compete for the grant money, we have to do it on our own time."*

System-wide information

For some, particularly funders, the issue is not one of too little information, but too much information and a limited capacity to make sense of it. A specific concern was that the challenge of disentangling data for funders and public agencies to assess needs is overly complex. Underlying the complexity is a need of organizations – funders, service providers and advocates – to agree upon a common set of leading indicators that can be used to identify strategic directions and measure progress on the largest scale. This issue will be addressed in next sections.

Public agencies, school systems and private funders fail to collaborate in setting priorities and allocating resources.

Earlier in this report we noted that for a number of reasons there is a tendency for organizations to differentiate or silo services rather than collaborate. In important respects, this is not an isolated issue. Rather, this is an expression of a similar but larger tendency of those funding and directing the system of service provision to

differentiate rather than collaborate. Again, there are quite understandable reasons for funders to differentiate themselves. According to one corporate funder who contributed to this study, it is often a matter of branding – a funder benefits by associating its name with a specific initiative, something that reflects their role in the community. From the perspective of a non-profit organization, differentiation may only be a consequence of each making targeted efforts to meet otherwise unaddressed needs.

However, no matter the reason, the failure of funders to collaborate effectively is fateful. When funders differentiate rather than collaborate in defining needs and funding programs it causes providers to differentiate as well. Ultimately, the consequence is that services are scattered and disconnected, resulting in the complexities that overwhelm those in need of services.

There are two aspects of the tendency of funders and public agencies to differentiate rather than collaborate: (1) a failure to establish clear priorities and (2) the lack of coordination in allocating resources.

The first aspect suggests a concern that the funders need to communicate more effectively in order to establish long term plans that can guide specific funding initiatives. This concern was by far most commonly raised in reference to early childhood programming, for two main reasons. The first owes to a very understandable void in institutional leadership. The public schools system naturally provides structure to programs serving children ages K-12. No such equivalent exists for children up to the age of five. The second reason is the rapid growth of interest in early childhood development and education, as summarized in an earlier part of this report. As an advocate for early childhood funding put it:

> *"When there were only three of us, no one noticed that we weren't on the same page. But now with twenty different people trying to figure what our plan is we look disorganized. But at least now we're in the same room and we're trying to figure it out."*

The second aspect concerns the allocation of resources. Service providers emphasize the difficulty of securing long term sustainable funding in order to effectively fully address an issue. Referring to the challenges of funding child development programs, a school-based health coordinator stated:

> *"People don't want to deal with it – they'd like to drop in, do something and leave as quick as possible but there aren't quick fixes for the issues in these areas – we need sustained, committed, on the ground work. The larger world doesn't understand what we are dealing with. People don't understand our needs unless they come out here and they usually don't."*

Program administrators also noted that collaboration increases administrative costs, but funders typically want to minimize administrative expenses in order to increase the quantity of services. As an administrator of a Head Start program put it:

> *"We were invited to work with a program to get the parents more involved. But it was too complicated to set up and the funding required that we focus on the services defined by program. I couldn't ask my teachers to take that on."*

The decentralized and ad-hoc system of educational support services inhibit the formation of professional and community-based constituencies for advocacy and change.

A final but strongly emphasized theme to emerge from the interviews concerned community engagement and advocacy. In many ways, this issue ties together the many themes so far discussed. Real change in educational outcomes will require a sustained effort on all sides, but to sustain that effort there must be advocates to keep the issue in the public eye.

Yet, there are deep concerns regarding engagement and advocacy. One very articulate participant put it this way:

> *"Everyone emphasizes engagement, but what do they really mean by engagement? They [public schools] say that want parental engagement, but*

what they really want is for parents to show up for parent-teacher conferences and to be involved in PTA – to support the school in doing what it's doing. But when it comes to real engagement – voicing their concerns, trying to change the way things are done – schools aren't so interested. "

A few service providers also questioned the meaning of engagement, but from the other perspective.

"I'd like to think that parents being involved means that they work with us to help make things better. But I've come to think that most parents think being involved means being the squeaky wheel – getting on our case to come fix a problem."

But, overshadowing these critiques of engagement is a much more hopeful perspective, often backed with very practical plans. Time and time again, those we spoke with described coalition building, empowerment, and advocacy as central to their mission. One program administrative and child advocate put directly:

"Our goal is to change how child services are funded and implemented. Programs are our 'in'. I want to get mom involved not only so her child is better off, but because when she sees how it works she'll become our best advocate. She'll tell others in her community to get involved. That's how things will change."

Another common perspective on advocacy focused on the public sector. Many of those we spoke with argued that in the long term real change – not on the scale of individual programs but on the scale of entire communities and the entire state – will require the involvement of state and local governments, and public schools. For those approaching the question from this perspective, community engagement means building coalitions that will advocate for new thinking and more public funding for education.

4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DETERMINANTS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

To better understand the factors that shape educational outcomes in the United Way's central New Mexico service area, we analyzed data drawn from secondary sources. The sources include New Mexico's Public Education Department (PED), National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), and the U.S. Census Bureau (Census)[50]. The data has been aggregated according to the enrollment boundaries[51] of 126 elementary schools in the four counties for which reliable data was available[52]. Elementary school boundaries are used to provide the greatest possible geographical detail; in some districts, there are as many as 10 elementary schools for every one high school.

The statistical method used in this analysis is simple correlation analysis, which measures relationship between two variables. In particular, we test the relationship between a commonly-used measure of academic performance – standardized test scores – and several independent or predictive variables.

The dependent variable throughout this analysis is the average percentage of

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[50] The specific sources of data included PED Stars data, available at http://nmped.datacation.net/; NCES School District Demographics System, available at http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/ed/index.asp; and the Census Bureau's 2005-2009 American Community Survey, available at http://www.census.gov/acs/www/.

[51] Boundary maps for the elementary schools were gathered from various sources. APS maps are available electronically in GIS format; maps for the other districts were variously created from electronically available flat (PDF) maps; scanning paper maps; and in a couple cases description provided by District administrators.

[52] Data on school performance is not available from PED for seven schools in the four county area.

elementary students passing standardized tests in reading, math and science[53]. The values ranged from 28 to 90 percent. Independent or explanatory variables used are of two types:(1) variables specific to schools (e.g. student – teacher ratio, qualified for free or reduced lunch, etc.); and (2) variables general to the community residing within the school boundary area, specific to households that have children enrolled in school (these variables include income indicators, family status, highest level of education attained by adults, household with or without telephones, etc.).

A. **Results of correlation analysis**

School-based variables

The results of analysis of the school-based variables produced some expected and some unexpected results. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced priced lunches, a useful measure of low economic status among students, was by far the best predictor of test performance, with a correlation coefficient (r) of -.80 (indicating that the relationship is negative and very strong). This finding is confirmed by Census data, which shows a similarly strong and negative relationship between the share of families with children under 18 years living in poverty with test performance (r = -.68).

Another strong relationship with test performance was the percentage of students who are white, non-Hispanic (r =.78). The relationship between test scores and the percentage of students with limited English proficiency was also negative (r = -.62). These relationships are not coincidental: the relationships between the share of white, non-Hispanic enrollment and both students with limited English proficiency (r = -.74) and those receiving subsidized lunch programs (r = -.85) are very strongly negative. Taken together, these results indicate that test scores are very likely to be higher in schools with relatively few low income students, who are white, non-

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[53] There is of course considerable debate regarding the usefulness of standardized test scores as a measure of student achievement. This debate is outside the scope of this report. For our purposes the scores are the only consistent and universally available measures of performance.

Hispanic and English proficient. These results lend very strong support for concerns regarding the persistence of the achievement gap along ethnic lines[54].

Other school-based data offers more surprising results. School size, measured as total enrollment, is unrelated to the share of students receiving passing test scores (r = .11). The presence of students with disabilities is also unrelated to test performance (r = -.13). Still more surprisingly, higher student-teacher ratios are weakly *and positively* correlated with success on standardized tests in schools in the four county area.

Community-based variables

Community-based variables, drawn from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, reflect characteristics of the communities belonging to students. We consider these variables for two reasons: in one regard, comparable data specific to students enrolled in school is not available (e.g. married status of families, or access to telephones); in another regard, these can be useful variables in their own right insofar as they reflect the characteristics of the neighborhoods and communities in which children are raised and live. Again, our objective is to consider the relationship between these variables and the success of students in passing standardized tests.

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[54] It must be emphasized that correlation analysis indicates the strength of a relationship between two variables and nothing more. In this analysis there many factors at play, and a strong relationship between two variables does not indicate that one is directly *causing* the other. For example, as in this case, a strong relationship between the proportion of white, non-Hispanic students and high test scores does not necessarily indicate that white, non-Hispanic students have any particular advantage on standardized tests. Rather one may equally conclude that economically-advantaged and/or English-proficient students are successful at tests, and that such students are just more likely to be white, non-Hispanic.

We consider three sets of community-based data: (1) levels of adult educational attainment among adults[55]; (2) family status (two parent, single parent, and so on); and (3) measures of isolation[56].

First, we consider adult educational attainment. The relationship between the percentage of adults who have earned a BA or graduate degree and test scores is strongly positive (r = .73). Conversely, the relationship between the percentage of adults who have not completed high school and test scores is equally strongly negative (r = -.72). These findings lend strong support to the observations of those interviewed, as discussed earlier. Children of parents (or, by this measure, communities) who have themselves had positive educational experiences are at a significant advantage in school and vice-versa. One may extend this observation to suggest that these parents are more likely to be engaged in the child's school life. This also suggests that children from these areas have ample access to peers and role models with high educational achievements.

Second, students of two-parent households are at a significant advantage (r = .53) compared to those single parent households (r = -.50)[57]. However, these patterns probably are not as simple as the traditional two parent model might suggest; that is, one parent works while the other remains at home to care for the children. In communities in which a high percentage of children are in two parent households,

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[55] The index of adult educational attainment is calculated as follows: (% with < 7th grade * -2) + (%<HS degree * -1) + (% with 'some college' or Associates degree * +1) + (% with BA degree * +2) + (% with graduate degree * +3). Values where then indexed from 0 (for the lowest score) to 100 (with the highest score). Adult educational attainment, by Census Bureau's definition, is the highest level of education attained by adults 25 year or over.

[56] For this study, isolation is the percentage of households without a vehicle plus the percentage without a telephone.

[57] Note that these variables include only households with children under 18 years of age. For this reason, these family structure variables do in fact closely track the specific circumstances of children, compared to the other community variables (e.g. levels of educational attainment) for which the population is the community at large.

with one employed, there is no significant benefit in terms of the academic achievement of the children (r = .02). Rather, it's very possible that the connection between family structure and the child's success in school is a function of economic advantage. Where both parents work, the relationship is very strongly positive (r = .62). Even among single parent households, the child's prospects are better when the parent is working (r = .32) rather than out of work (r = -.53).

Third, we consider the implications of social and geographical isolation on children's academic performance. Similar to the school-based data, Census data shows that children living in communities in which heads of households are not proficient in English are at a significant disadvantage (r = -.46). By another measure, children from communities with a high proportion of households without access to a working vehicle and/or a telephone are again at a significant disadvantage (r = -.41). This finding is of particular concern when one considers the specific geography of these patterns. This is reviewed in the next section.

B. <u>At-risk communities in the four county area</u>

This statistical analysis points to a number of community factors that affect the educational success of children in the United Way of Central New Mexico's four county service area. Based on this quantitative analysis, the communities most at risk for poor educational performance include:

- Communities where adults have low levels of educational attainment
- Communities with high rates of poverty
- Communities with a high degree of isolation

Table A1, in the Appendix to this report, provides a complete listing of these and other variables for each of the 126 elementary schools, organized by county. Tables 1 – 4 show these same variables, for the 10 lowest performing elementary schools in each county, ranked according the lowest percentage of student passing the tests.

Overall, out of the 4 counties, Bernalillo and Sandoval County have the greatest need based on educational performance (percentage passing standardized tests). When examining the correlates, we find evidence of a need for different interventions based on urban-ness. While Sandoval has a greater need for direct services, it appears that Bernalillo County would benefit from better coordination of services.

School performance

Figure 4 is a map of elementary school performance, as measured by average test scores, for the 126 elementary schools in the four county area. More detailed map of APS and Rio Rancho School Districts is presented in Figure 4A, in the appendix to this report. The areas with the lowest pass rates on standardized tests include school clustered in southwest and southeast Albuquerque and around native lands in Sandoval County (Cuba, Algodones and Cochiti). Data for the ten lowest performing elementary schools, by county, are presented in **Tables 1-4.**

FIGURE 4. PERCENTAGE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THAT PASS STANDARDIZED TESTS IN CENTRAL NEW MEXICO, 2009-2010

Percentage of Students that Pass Standardized Tests

- 0% - 43%
- 44% - 49%
- 50% - 60%
- 61% - 69%
- 70% - 90%

TABLE 1. BERNALILLO COUNTY: 10 LOWEST PERFORMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, BY LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
MESA	APS	207	31	14	24	99	43	33
LOWELL	APS	379	32	15	48	99	57	24
LOS PADILLAS	APS	259	33	16	36	99	30	10
KIT CARSON	APS	633	33	12	34	100	35	8
ARMIJO	APS	519	33	20	48	99	37	14
EMERSON	APS	485	34	11	44	99	51	29
LA LUZ	APS	303	35	13	37	99	46	14
WHITTIER	APS	463	35	14	31	99	55	28
WHERRY	APS	523	37	20	56	99	46	29
PAJARITO	APS	629	38	17	28	64	38	7

TABLE 2: SANDOVAL COUNTY: 10 LOWEST PERFORMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, BY LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
CUBA	CUBA	228	36	15	77	99	32	54
ALGODONES	BERNALILLO	135	37	30	93	98	26	15
COCHITI	BERNALILLO	182	41	19	86	98	27	4
SANTO DOMINGO	BERNALILLO	255	44	20	100	99	0	19
JEMEZ VALLEY	JEMEZ VAL	128	51	18	18	63	36	19
PLACITAS	BERNALILLO	149	57	17	45	31	78	3
W.D. CARROLL	BERNALILLO	375	57	18	79	99	47	8
PUESTA DEL SOL	RIO RANCHO	824	57	15	10	62	51	7
RIO RANCHO	RIO RANCHO	763	66	17	5	51	53	11
COLINAS DEL NORTE	RIO RANCHO	753	66	13	12	59	60	6

TABLE 3: TORRANCE COUNTY: 6 LOWEST PERFORMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, BY LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

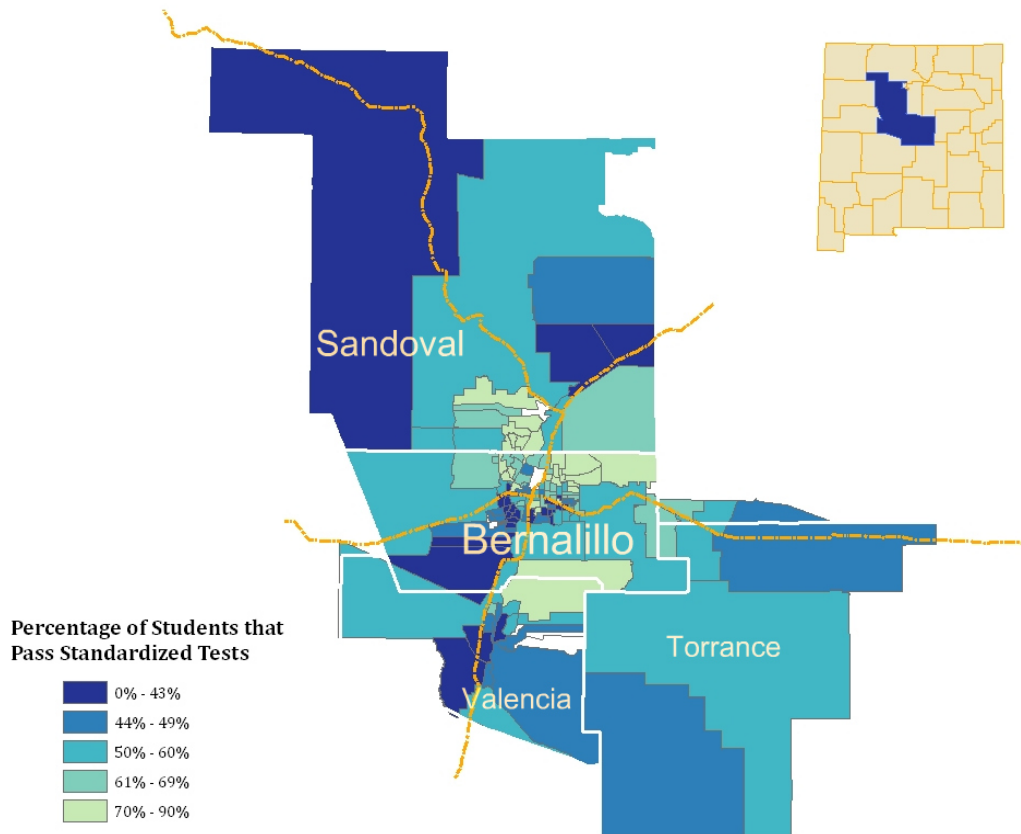| SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
MOUNTAINVIEW	MORIARTY	328	43	21	13	66	36	5
MORIARTY	MORIARTY	474	46	8	18	99	79	14
MOUNTAINAIR	MOUNTAINAIR	141	48	17	0	83	43	17
ESTANCIA (NEW)	ESTANCIA	249	53	19	14	99	55	10
EDGEWOOD	MORIARTY	315	63	12	4	50	36	6
ROUTE 66	MORIARTY	327	64	8	3	44	38	4

TABLE 4: VALENCIA COUNTY: 10 LOWEST PERFORMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, BY LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
CENTRAL	BELEN	264	37	13	8	99	36	11
ANN PARISH	LOS LUNAS	532	42	12	30	99	38	17
TOME	LOS LUNAS	479	42	16	38	99	36	18
RIO GRANDE	BELEN	285	42	29	15	99	36	20
LA MERCED	BELEN	561	49	16	12	70	18	4
DANIEL FERNANDEZ	LOS LUNAS	272	49	14	30	81	31	7
RAYMOND GABALDON	LOS LUNAS	351	50	16	5	68	36	9
LOS LUNAS	LOS LUNAS	507	51	12	10	76	40	9
VALENCIA	LOS LUNAS	406	54	19	7	63	43	7
JARAMILLO	BELEN	404	56	15	13	99	50	11

Free and reduced lunch

As mentioned in the previous section, the best predictor of school performance is the percentage of students enrolled in the Free or Reduced Lunch program. This pattern is especially clear among schools with the lowest performance rankings. A map of the percentage of elementary school students receiving free or reduced lunch is shown in **Figure 5**.

This observation implies that interventions, in areas like Sandoval County and parts of Valencia County, focusing on the direct provision of services, such as those that address food insecurity would likely have a very meaningful impact on school performance. This is echoed in our qualitative findings, where service providers emphasize that the issues facing their community are ones of basic poverty: food insecurity, obesity (symptomatic of poor nutrition), drug use, and high mortality.

FIGURE 5. PERCENTAGE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THAT RECEIVE FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH IN CENTRAL NEW MEXICO, 2009-2010.

Free and Reduced Lunch
- 0% - 34%
- 35% - 51%
- 51% - 66%
- 66% - 99%
- 99% - 100%
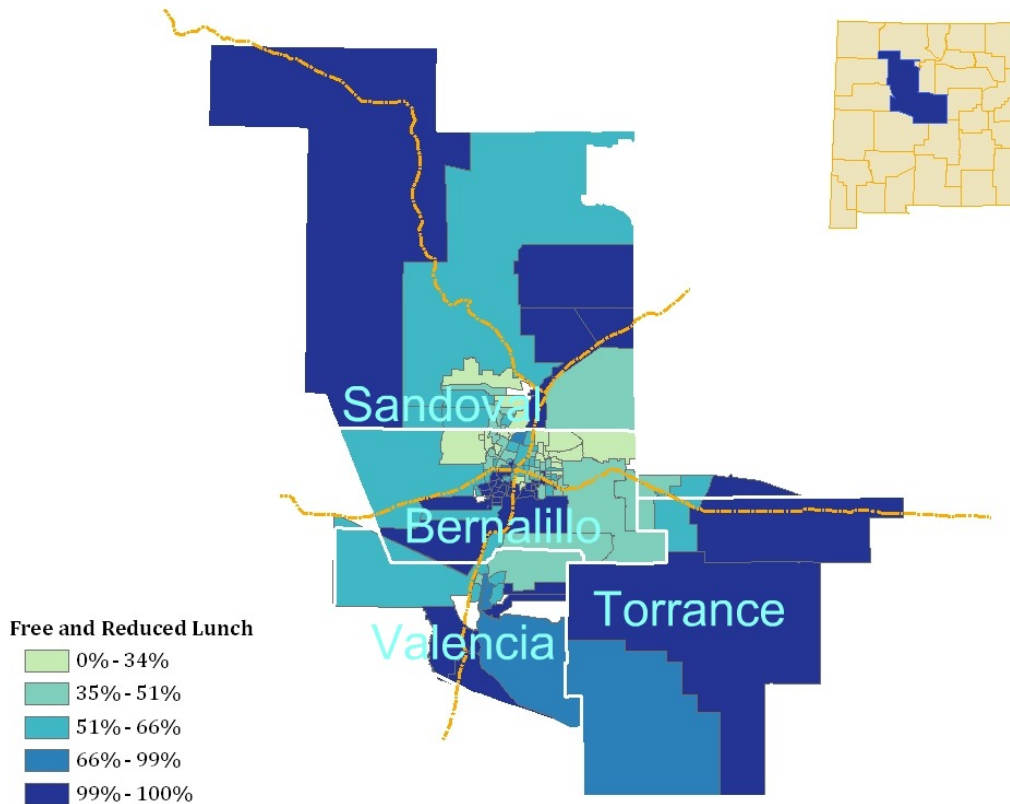
Adult Educational Attainment

According to the data used in this study, overall level of adult educational attainment among community members is the second most meaningful predictor of school performance on standardized tests. A map of levels of adult educational attainment among community members is shown in **Figure 6**.

This relationship is somewhat less pronounced among the lowest performing schools in each of the four counties. This does not suggest that community educational attainment is not a useful indicator – the aggregate statistical data indicates a strong overall negative relationship between percentage passing the standardized tests and levels of adult educational attainment. Rather, what we find

at the county level of disaggregation, with a few exceptions (Placitas Elementary in Sandoval County and Moriarty Elementary) is that attainment levels fairly tightly clustered statistically within each county.

In low performing elementary school areas correspondingly low levels of adult educational achievement might indicate that interventions such as family engagement and family literacy programs, and better workforce development would likely have a strong effect on school performance. The reason is twofold: 1) providing community members with an opportunity to have a positive educational experience and to gain a better understanding of the benefits of education may foster family support for children's education, and 2) workforce development may provide children's families with greater economic resources (which we have found to be the highest correlate to school performance) and provide a model for their children to experience the direct connection between educational performance and economic opportunity.

FIGURE 6. INDEX OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ADULTS 25 YEARS AND OVER IN CENTRAL NEW MEXICO, BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOUNDARIES, 2005-2009 (AVERAGE).
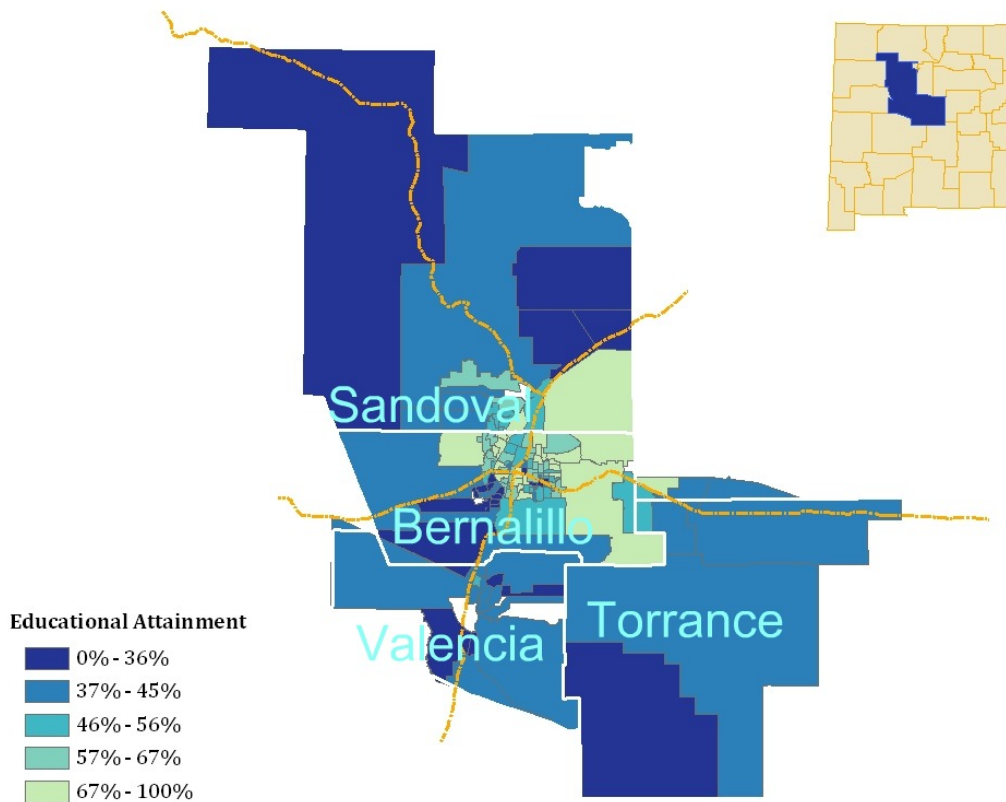
Isolation

A third predictor of poor academic performance is geographic isolation. Note that the measure of isolation used in this study is largely economic – no access to a vehicle and/or no access to a telephone (and by likely implication, limited internet access). However, the consequences of this measure of isolation in remote rural areas are likely to be markedly different than in more densely settled urban areas. To be without a vehicle or telephone in the rural areas of Sandoval, Torrance or Valencia counties would have severe implications for the capacity of a family to be actively engaged at their child's school or to access needed services.

As the map of household isolation in **Figure 7** shows, limited access to vehicles and telephones tends to be greatest in some of the most geographically remote areas,

including native lands in northern Sandoval County and in southern Valencia County. In these areas, facilitating access to educational support services could have significant benefits. This finding was strongly re-enforced in our conversations of community leaders in these remote areas[58].

FIGURE 7. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT A VEHICLE AND/OR TELEPHONE IN CENTRAL NEW MEXICO, BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOUNDARIES, 2005-2009 (AVERAGE)

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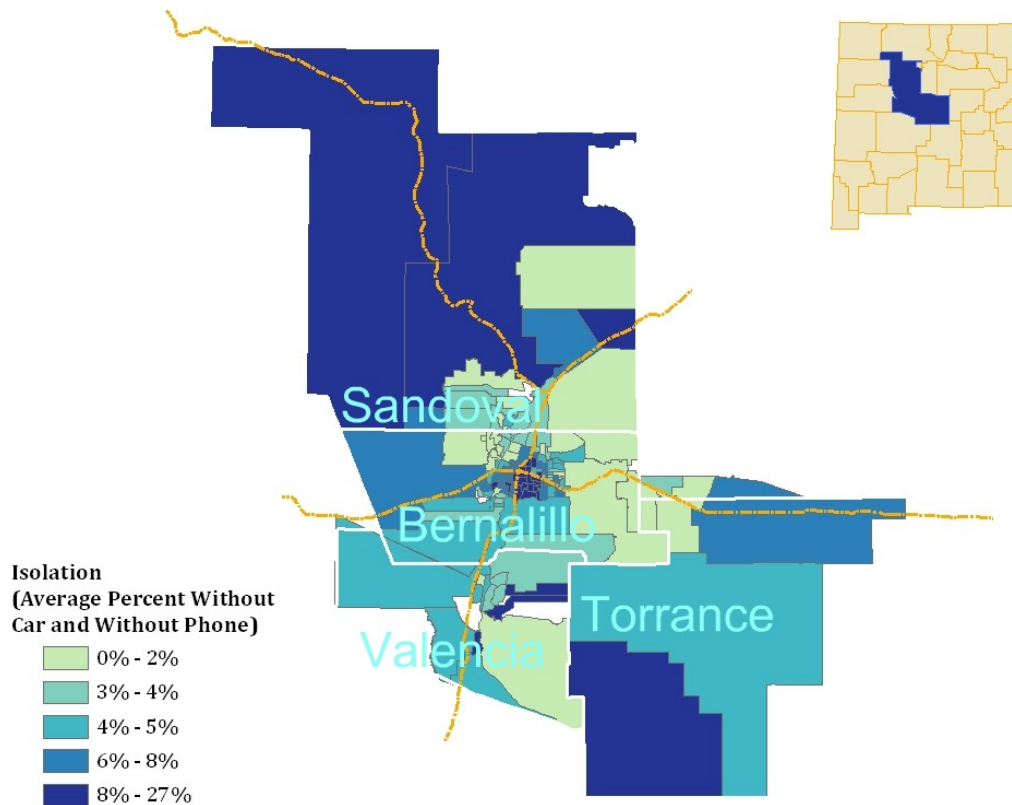
[58] Geographical isolation is also correlated with limited English skills. A map of the percentage of elementary school English language learners in shown in the Appendix, in **Figure 9**.

5.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study is to identify areas where United Way's investments are likely to have the greatest impact in improving educational outcomes in the four county service area. We began with a review of research and best practices, and found that there is a strong consensus among educators, researchers and policy leaders, both nationally and locally, regarding many best practices in educational support services. However, based on 89 interviews and supported by extensive analysis of academic and socioeconomic data, we have learned that families, service providers and funders in central New Mexico often face significant barriers in implementing these best practices. This suggests that while programmatic investments are much needed, the benefit of such investments would be greatly enhanced if attention is also given to reducing broader structural and institutional barriers.

The recommendations offered here follow, point by point, the best practices outlined above. Some of the recommendations are narrow and specific, and may yield positive outcomes in the short term. Others are much broader, though hopefully no less specific. The benefits of these broader initiatives may take longer to be realized and require a greater commitment of leadership. But if implemented these initiatives may result in much deeper changes by helping to reduce some of the barriers that seem to persistently undermine the best efforts and the best intentions.

Note, finally, that the recommendations provided here are often interrelated. One recommendation may be contingent on another, or others may be complementary. Where necessary, these connections are described.

A. <u>Establish systems for broad-based screening and universal application</u>

The first challenge is the identification of children and families most at-risk and the assessment of their needs. Currently, the systems for identification and assessment

are largely hit-or-miss, often with families with relatively good skills initiating contact and receiving services. To address these issues, two strategies should be considered:

Establish outreach programs to screen children and families for risk factors.

It is never too early to begin, as emerging brain development research illustrates. Ideally, outreach programs should begin with the first evidence of pregnancy, working with primary care physicians, obstetricians and pregnancy support centers to identify pregnant mothers in need of support. More practically, outreach programs can work with local hospitals and birthing centers to enroll children and families in early child support programs. Note that 'First Born' home visiting curriculum used by St. Joseph's Community Health limits enrollment to children no more than two months old. Another opportunity to identify at-risk children is upon enrollment in child care as well as Early Head Start programs. Beyond early childhood, children should be carefully screened upon enrollment in early academic programs, from Head Start to pre-K. Programs should also be established upon enrollment in public kindergarten programs. Early initiatives to develop outreach and screening programs should involve consultation with Child Find, an Albuquerque Public Schools-based program to identify and support children with developmental disabilities.

Any outreach and screening program should have three characteristics:

- Target communities with high risk factors

- Work with established programs that are respected within the community.

- Ensure that the outreach and screening is broad-based, and universal at the points of contact. This helps to minimize the stigma associated with participation.

Establish a program of universal assessment and application.

Outreach and screening programs are complex and can be expensive. However, the marginal cost of more comprehensive assessment and cataloging and sharing data is relatively low while the benefits can be considerable. The example of UtahClicks.org was discussed earlier. In this example, application for any given income support program in Utah is used by needs coordinators to evaluate eligibility for other programs. A similar model could be created to facilitate the coordination of child development and educational support services.

B. Establish and fund an organizational structure for early childhood programs

Early childhood advocates, particularly in Albuquerque, have made great strides in drawing attention to the importance of early childhood programming. [59] However, early childhood advocates face a structural disadvantage in competition for funding and support. Programs that support K-12 and post-secondary students have natural and powerful institutional support from public schools, community colleges and universities. Early childhood programs lack such institutional support.

The issue goes beyond advocacy and the competition for funding. As early childhood development is better understood, the coordination of services is recognized as ever more important. Without an appropriate organizational structure, planning and the coordination of programs and services is all but impossible.

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[59] Among the many forums for discussion and organization around early childhood issues in New Mexico are: Early Childhood Collaborative (Albuquerque Public Schools), Early Childhood Action Network, Bernalillo County Early Childhood Action Partnership, ABC Community Schools Partnership, Center for Excellence in Early Childhood at the UNM College of Education, SPARK (New Mexico Community Foundation), Strong Starts for Childhood, New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership; Strong Starts for Children (Everyday Dialog)

For these reasons, <u>we recommended that funding be allocated to establish a coordinating organization for early childhood programs in central New Mexico</u>. At a minimum, funding should be adequate to support three FTE (Executive Director, Program Coordinator, Community and Outreach Coordinator), work space and associated expenses. The functions of the organization should include:

- Strategic planning – the organization should be responsible for system-wide assessment of the needs, including research of community needs, inventory of service capacities, and development of strategic plans to bridge these needs and capacities.

- Programmatic coordination – the organization should coordinate with the growing number of service providers and community organizations to help to direct resources to areas identified with the greatest needs. The organization should also play the critical role of coordinating programs with public school systems.

- Point of community contact – the organization should serve as a point of contact for the community, either directly or by referral, providing assessments and facilitating access to needed services.

- Advocacy – the organization should represent the early childhood community in relationships with public and private organizations.

A significant challenge in establishing such an organization would be in effectively managing relationships with individuals and organizations active in the early childhood communities. To be effective, the organization must establish a standing that is seen to be both independent and open to participation. To this end, it would be essential that program developers engage with the participants of the many early childhood forums listed above.

C. **Support professional development in early childhood services**

Research discussed above shows that the quality of training of teachers and child care workers is perhaps the single most important factor in success of these programs. Yet, child care administrators in central New Mexico report that recruiting, training and retaining a qualified workforce is one of their greatest challenges.

For this reason, we recommended that funding be allocated to support the professional development of the early child care work force. In particular, we recommend providing financial support to T.E.A.C.H. NM[60].

T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) NM plays a key role in improving the quality of early childhood education in New Mexico by working with early childhood service advocates and providers to promote and support the professionalization and training of the child development service workforce. T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships that enable early childhood educators (teachers, assistant teachers, directors, principals, and family child care home professionals) to attend college and work toward associates, bachelors, or graduate degrees. New Mexico is one of 21 states that offer T.E.A.C.H. scholarships through a national program operated by Child Care Services Association. National longitudinal data shows that T.E.A.C.H. scholarships increase teacher education, boost teacher compensation and reduce teacher turnover. [61]

In the words of former Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish,

> *T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood New Mexico provides the foundation needed for strengthening early childhood programs in our state. When teachers and directors get increased education in early childhood, the quality of programs increases. With more education and compensation, the retention of qualified*

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[60] http://www.teachnm.org/

[61] T.E.A.C.H. New Mexico Annual Report for 2009.

early childhood teachers will increase, reducing the current rapid turnover. Investing in high quality early learning opportunities for our children is the single best economic program.

D. <u>Support community-based service-learning programs for middle school and high school students</u>

Although evidence based on program evaluations remains incomplete, there is a growing sense that effective dropout programs are structured to be socially and emotionally supportive, flexible and relevant, providing structure while accepting the diverse circumstances that teens face. This approach seems appropriate to the diversity of conditions of New Mexico, where teenagers are often drawn between time-honored cultures of their community and the restless economic and social demands of the broader society. Dropout prevention programs should begin in the community, where the identity of teenagers is rooted, and from there build bridges to address the other demands of society.

Building on this approach, <u>we recommend that funding be allocated to support the development of school-based service learning and out of school community building projects</u>.

Community programs for youth differ in their objectives, design, and approach. Because of the complexities of adolescent development and the diversity of communities in central New Mexico, no one program can serve all young people. Therefore, programs must be flexible enough to adapt to the diversity of the young people they serve and the communities in which they operate. There should be an emphasis on providing a wide array of opportunities that appeal to and meet the needs of diverse youth, with particular attention to the needs of disadvantaged and underserved youth.

To achieve this flexibility and diversity, consideration must be given to developing community-regional systems of coordination. Empowered to develop their own

initiatives, the diverse communities in central New Mexico will naturally provide the array of opportunities needed. Regional coordination of these local community-based initiatives can assist in linking youth with programming that best meets their interests and needs. Further, regional participation can help to monitor the accessibility and quality of programming, establishing agreed upon standards and metrics, providing assistance in meeting these standards.

In New Mexico, where economic considerations often lead students to leave school in order to earn money to support themselves and their families, initiatives that flexibly join academic programming with work-oriented skill development may be welcomed. Programs such as Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP)[62] have found that financial incentives and stipends for participation not only result in higher levels of engagement but also serve to foster a broader sense of relevance for both academic and community involvement.

E. **Establish programs to fund and incentivize effective case management**

Perhaps the single strongest message to emerge from this research is that effective support of a child's educational achievement must address the full range of the child's needs – in home, school and community environments, from health, nutrition and safety to developmental progress, early literacy and skill acquisition. However, based on discussions with local professionals, access to, and the coordination of the array of child and student support services is the principal barrier to effective intervention in central New Mexico. While there are many reasons why the coordination of services is so limited, the single best explanation is that, in most cases, payment structures discourage (or at least, do not encourage) collaboration among private sector service providers.

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[62] http://www.childtrends.org/lifecourse/programs/QuantumOpportunitiesProgram.htm
QOP is positively reviewed by Promising Practices Network
(http://www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=27) and the American Youth Policy Forum (http://www.aypf.org/publications/compendium/C1S37.pdf)

For this reason, <u>we recommended that funding be allocated to support case</u> <u>management services for educational support programs</u>. There are direct and indirect means that could be used to create case management programs.

- *Direct funding for case management.* Both the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) have provided case management services to families, children and students. However, funding for these programs has been severely cut in recent years. The United Way of Central New Mexico and other funding organizations could help to alleviate the impact of these cuts by funding case management services provided by local private, non-profit organizations.

- *Incentivize case management.* Bernalillo County Pathways employs an innovative strategy to promote collaboration among service providers working with at-risk adult populations. This model could be effectively applied to child and educational support services. The program, first developed by Ohio's Community Health Access Program (CHAP-Ohio.net), draws together providers of various services, establishes an agreed-up universal needs assessment, and pays case managers employed by these providers when a client successfully meets a goal with one or another participating provider. As is standard practice, the direct services are paid for by the appropriate funding organization (e.g. Medicaid); the only cost to Pathways is the case management incentives. The advantages of the program are that there is common or universal assessment of needs; individual providers receive an incentive to collaborate effectively with other providers; and the incentive is paid only when a goal is successful achieved.

Case management programs working with children, students and their families should be designed to focus on critical transition periods, helping to align programs and support needed by the child and family as they move from one institutional setting to the next (e.g. from child care into academic programs, from elementary school into middle school). Additionally, to the extent possible, case managers

should be encouraged to work closely with schools, facilitating family, community and school engagement programs. The role of schools is taken up in the next section.

F. **Support the development of Family Resource Centers and Community Schools**

Closely tied to the need to improve collaboration and coordination of child, student and family services is access to resources. Not only do families struggle with coordinating the various services that they may need, they perhaps more fundamentally struggle to access services. This issue includes both basic geographical factors (e.g. transportation) and social-cultural factors (e.g. feeling welcomed by the site of services). These issues can and should be addressed with initiatives to co-locate services in accessible areas of the community.

To this end, <u>we recommend that funders work with governmental entities, community-based organizations, service providers and schools to establish 'one-stop-shops' or 'family resource centers' that aggregate family and educational support services and facilitate case management and service referral</u>.

Public schools should play a central role in development of family resource centers. There is both strong precedent and growing organizational support for this. The Family and Youth Resource Act (FYRA), which was passed by the New Mexico legislature in 2004 allocated $1 million to the Public Education Department to support schools in forging long-term partnerships with agencies and community organizations to address non-academic needs of students and their families[63]. These partnerships employed resource liaisons (essentially a case manager) to conduct needs assessments; make referrals to service providers; partner with businesses, civic and community organizations to provide additional resources; promote family engagement; and support drop-out prevention programs.

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[63] http://hsc.unm.edu/som/prc/_pdfs/FYRA%20Final%20Eval%20Report%202006-07.pdf

Unfortunately, though FYRA authorized programs were implemented in 38 schools statewide and served 17,422 students by 2006, the Act has been defunded. Despite the loss of state funding, the program could serve as a useful model for similar, possibly privately-funded initiatives.

An impediment to collaborative partnerships among governmental agencies, public schools and private organizations are legal questions of governance, frequently complicated by practical matters such as liability, programmatic standards and the like. Again, there is a useful model and, in fact, an existing organizational structure in Albuquerque to address these issues. ABC Community School Partnership was formed by a joint powers agreement between the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and Albuquerque Public Schools, with participation of United Way of Central New Mexico and the New Mexico Community Foundation. The purpose of the agreement is:

> *To increase parent involvement, student academic achievement and overall community quality of life, through the creation and support of cooperative and collaborative working relationships with schools and the business community, social service agencies, government agencies, faith-based organizations, civic groups, neighborhood associations and post secondary institutions.*[64]

The design of family resource centers (FRCs) should reflect conditions and practices specific to the various regions throughout United Way's four county service area. In the broadest terms, the design of FRCs in the rural parts of the four county area should be different than those in urban areas such as Albuquerque, Rio Rancho and Los Lunas. In urban areas, with relatively high density and more readily available transportation networks, FRCs should be established at well located and easily accessible locations, such as schools, and be open to offering extended hours.

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[64] Joint Powers Agreement Among the County of Bernalillo, The Albuquerque Public Schools, and the City of Albuquerque.

In rural areas, we recommend the establishment of FRCs that operate on consistent but rotating schedules in various locations in each county. For instance, in Torrance County it may make sense for centers to be open daily on a rotating basis in Moriarty, Estancia, Encino and Mountainair, with staff and possibly resources moving between them each day of the week. The rotating schedule would minimize transportation costs to households and mitigate the sense of social isolation often associated with an unwillingness to access services, while the regularity of the schedule would also assist families to plan and establish routines. Again, it would be ideal to locate the centers in public schools, as schools are easily accessible, a site of regular contact for families with children, and are generally trusted within the community.

G. Build cross-sector partnerships to align services and braid funding

A few of the initiatives outlined above can be implemented with targeted funding and some measure of collaboration among providers. However, to foster broader change – 'collective impacts' – that are sustainable and scalable we recommend the development of cross-sector partnerships to organize educational support programming in central New Mexico.

In the terms laid out by Kania and Kramer, a cross-sector partnership would involve:

> *"The commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. [This will require] a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants."*

The Strive Partnership could be used as a model for the development of such partnerships.

Figure 8 shows representations of two systems of service funding and provision. **Graphic A** represents the current system. The graphic suggests the extent to which funders and community-based organizations and service providers work in mutual

isolation. That is, collaboration among funders on matters such as strategic planning, program evaluation and, most importantly, program funding is limited. Likewise, collaboration among providers is limited, and services available to children and families lack coordination. Instead, the system is largely structured according to isolated relationships between individual funders and providers. Limited communication among funders, in particular, means that some quite useful programs may go unfunded, while others may receive funding for very similar programs from many different funders. In short, resources are allocated in this system according to highly individualized relationships, with limited capacity to assess broader needs.

Graphic B represents a model more in line with a cross-section partnership. The key element here is communication and collaboration. Funders, providers and community organizations work collectively, both coordinating their own initiatives and also more generally as a partnership. With an overarching strategic plan and agreed upon metrics, the partnership is also better able to coordinate services to the individual family.

Alignment of early childhood and K-12 programs

As it currently exists, the gulf between early childhood and K-12 directed programs is a significant barrier to alignment. Also, despite the growing momentum among early childhood advocates and program administrators, there remains a considerable disparity in terms of strength and cohesion of leadership of the early childhood programs compared to that of K-12 directed programs. For these reasons, one may weigh the advantages of two different organizational structures.

In one approach, it may be most efficient to engage the entire sweep of educational support programs within one overarching partnership, promoting cradle to career alignment within the structure of a single initiative. An alternative approach may be the creation of a stand alone early childhood partnership. This would allow early childhood advocates and organizations to develop a solid leadership structure,

affording both an opportunity to pull together the disparate and rapidly multiplying initiatives within early childhood and to allow these organizations to engage with K-12 leadership on more equal footing. Bridging the two approaches, another option may be to begin by developing an overarching cradle-to-career partnership, and forming an early childhood sub-partnership from within. This would foster alignment between early childhood and K-12 programming while providing the early childhood sector a needed opportunity to consolidate its leadership.

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This study has not happened in isolation. Over the past months, our research has put us in touch with dozens of the region's leaders in educational policy and programming. Our interviews and discussions, our data collection and analysis have made us deeply aware of the challenges facing the community. But we have also become aware of the thoughtfulness and energy that so many individuals have committed to improving the educational prospects of the children in the region. We know, for instance, that many in the community are already engaged in conversations that may lead to greater collaboration and perhaps even the kind of cross-sector partnerships described here.

The final conclusion of this study, then, is that while there are many inefficiencies in educational support programs in central New Mexico, the single greatest challenge facing the community is the need to move beyond narrow isolated initiatives to create partnerships capable of fostering collaboration and providing sustainable funding. The conversations happening today are a start, but ultimately real improvement will require shared investment in organizational structures to plan, coordinate and sustain initiatives capable of collective impact.

FIGURE 8: SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION SERVICE FUNDING AND PROVISION

A. Current System
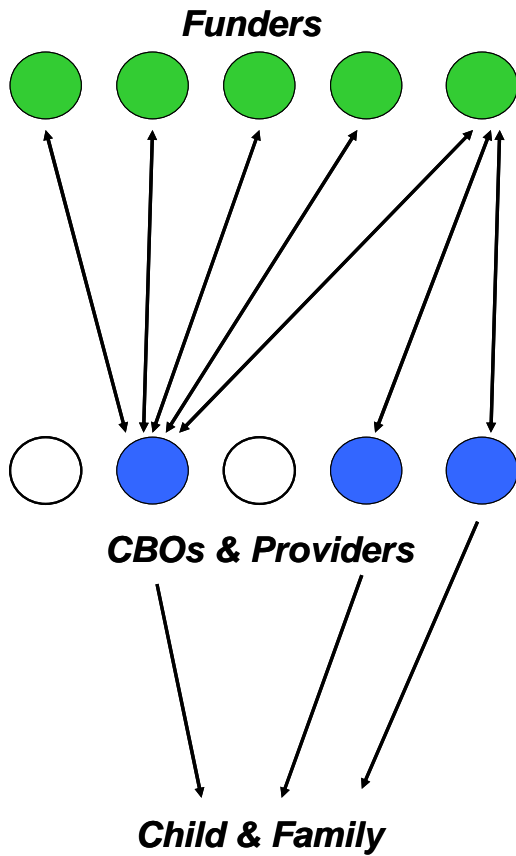
B. Cross-Sector Partnership
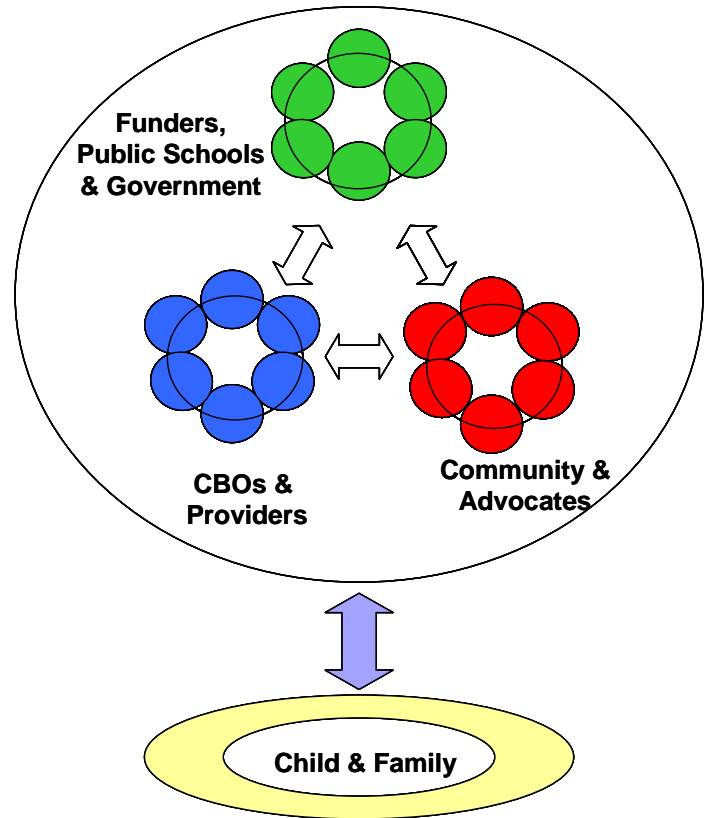
APPENDIX

TABLE A1: BERNALILLO COUNTY: SELECTED SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED INDICATORS

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
A. MONTOYA	APS	386	59	21	5	36	69	4
ACOMA	APS	220	53	22	5	50	56	5
ADOBE ACRES	APS	897	53	14	49	100	35	9
ALAMEDA	APS	318	60	12	23	62	51	7
ALAMOSA	APS	703	40	10	39	100	30	17
ALVARADO	APS	421	62	16	12	50	60	4
APACHE	APS	428	52	17	11	44	61	11
ARMIJO	APS	519	33	20	48	99	37	14
ARROYO DEL OSO	APS	406	68	19	7	34	59	12
ATRISCO	APS	342	53	16	30	99	45	5
BANDELIER	APS	558	77	14	8	29	73	26
BARCELONA	APS	575	42	7	43	99	31	8
BEL-AIR	APS	426	53	16	15	68	35	23
BELLEHAVEN	APS	341	65	19	9	43	37	7
CARLOS REY	APS	939	50	9	36	64	30	7
CHAMIZA	APS	620	74	14	2	19	68	5
CHAPARRAL	APS	853	62	17	12	43	56	5
CHELWOOD	APS	518	51	21	7	56	47	14
COCHITI	APS	330	53	14	16	81	61	15
COLLET PARK	APS	374	67	23	7	48	64	10
COMANCHE	APS	416	65	18	7	39	63	12
DENNIS CHAVEZ	APS	760	86	14	4	12	85	5
DOLORES GONZALES	APS	441	59	16	38	99	63	20
DOUBLE EAGLE	APS	480	87	13	1	4	100	3
DOUGLAS MACARTHUR	APS	252	61	25	12	65	47	12
DURANES	APS	277	42	24	36	99	73	10
EAST SAN JOSE	APS	603	49	14	59	100	62	12
EDMUND G ROSS	APS	556	49	16	8	55	61	7
EDWARD GONZALES	APS	1	44	11	37	0	33	13
EMERSON	APS	485	34	11	44	99	51	29
EUBANK	APS	547	44	16	22	99	44	12
EUGENE FIELD	APS	376	41	14	41	99	51	13
GEORGIA O'KEEFFE	APS	592	81	9	3	10	99	9
GOV BENT	APS	575	54	20	8	54	53	18
GRIEGOS	APS	354	80	12	6	49	68	9
HAWTHORNE	APS	568	41	16	44	99	33	15
HODGIN	APS	544	47	17	16	64	38	22
HUB H HUMPHREY	APS	446	82	13	4	11	84	7
INEZ	APS	452	65	24	7	45	56	23
JOHN BAKER	APS	513	71	15	5	24	74	9
KIRTLAND	APS	371	53	12	38	99	78	20
KIT CARSON	APS	633	33	12	34	100	35	8
LA LUZ	APS	303	35	13	37	99	46	14
LA MESA	APS	715	49	11	69	100	35	33
LAVALAND	APS	622	38	8	49	100	26	16
LEW WALLACE	APS	296	51	16	26	52	62	12
LONGFELLOW	APS	356	55	12	35	58	65	21
LOS PADILLAS	APS	259	33	16	36	99	30	10
LOS RANCHOS	APS	351	53	18	20	56	51	5
LOWELL	APS	379	32	15	48	99	57	24
MANZANO MESA	APS	611	65	13	20	51	46	10
MARIE M HUGHES	APS	725	67	14	4	35	62	4

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
MARK TWAIN	APS	328	44	30	18	61	61	20
MARYANN BINFORD	APS	869	46	18	34	100	44	10
MATHESON PARK	APS	321	62	13	7	54	49	8
MC COLLUM	APS	418	61	24	11	56	34	7
MESA	APS	207	31	14	24	99	43	33
MISSION AVENUE	APS	384	54	20	15	58	51	15
MITCHELL	APS	440	61	18	10	42	61	10
MONTE VISTA	APS	493	72	16	8	27	92	29
MONTEZUMA	APS	541	45	28	27	51	90	18
MOUNTAIN VIEW	APS	380	54	16	58	99	49	10
NAVAJO	APS	702	48	18	44	100	32	9
NORTH STAR	APS	595	91	11	2	4	98	6
ONATE	APS	288	72	11	3	25	73	6
OSUNA	APS	434	76	17	4	19	74	11
PAINTED SKY	APS	1	57	9	30	0	41	11
PAJARITO	APS	629	38	17	28	64	38	7
PETROGLYPH	APS	760	70	13	6	31	68	6
REGINALD CHAVEZ	APS	371	63	20	19	99	69	12
S. Y. JACKSON	APS	535	85	19	2	16	84	9
SAN ANTONITO	APS	288	86	15	1	14	75	2
SANDIA BASE	APS	523	56	15	6	35	44	15
SEVEN-BAR	APS	901	65	16	4	23	65	6
SIERRA VISTA	APS	810	63	16	4	36	60	4
SOMBRA DEL MONTE	APS	443	57	15	12	44	55	13
SUNSET VIEW	APS	426	72	12	5	20	60	3
SUSIE R. MARMON	APS	789	42	18	21	62	50	9
TIERRA ANTIGUA	APS	442	71	13	4	21	83	0
TOMASITA	APS	423	38	11	28	78	43	16
VALLE VISTA	APS	551	40	16	47	99	44	13
VENTANA RANCH	APS	704	71	8	3	20	59	2
WHERRY	APS	523	37	20	56	99	46	29
WHITTIER	APS	463	35	14	31	99	55	28
ZIA	APS	414	60	23	21	47	72	19
ZUNI	APS	418	69	15	6	44	58	11

TABLE A2: SANDOVAL COUNTY: SELECTED SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED INDICATORS

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
CORRALES	APS	495	75	15	2	23	80	7
ALGODONES	BERNALILLO	135	37	30	93	98	26	15
COCHITI	BERNALILLO	182	41	19	86	98	27	4
PLACITAS	BERNALILLO	149	57	17	45	31	78	3
SANTO DOMINGO	BERNALILLO	255	44	20	100	99	0	19
W.D. CARROLL	BERNALILLO	375	57	18	79	99	47	8
CUBA	CUBA	228	36	15	77	99	32	54
JEMEZ VALLEY	JEMEZ VAL	128	51	18	18	63	36	19
CIELO AZUL	RIO RANCHO	709	68	13	5	37	40	6
COLINAS DEL NORTE	RIO RANCHO	753	66	13	12	59	60	6
ENCHANTED HILLS	RIO RANCHO	629	75	12	6	24	38	4
ERNEST STAPLETON	RIO RANCHO	836	71	15	6	46	50	6
MAGGIE CORDOVA	RIO RANCHO	856	76	11	16	35	56	8
MARTIN KING JR	RIO RANCHO	885	71	11	8	38	35	5
PUESTA DEL SOL	RIO RANCHO	824	57	15	10	62	51	7
RIO RANCHO	RIO RANCHO	763	66	17	5	51	53	11
SANDIA VISTA	RIO RANCHO	408	72	15	9	31	40	3
VISTA GRANDE	RIO RANCHO	733	77	13	8	29	40	3

TABLE A3: TORRANCE COUNTY: SELECTED SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED INDICATORS

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
ESTANCIA (NEW)	ESTANCIA	249	53	19	14	99	55	10
EDGEWOOD	MORIARTY	315	63	12	4	50	36	6
MORIARTY	MORIARTY	474	46	8	18	99	79	14
MOUNTAINVIEW	MORIARTY	328	43	21	13	66	36	5
ROUTE 66	MORIARTY	327	64	8	3	44	38	4
MOUNTAINAIR	MOUNTAINAIR	141	48	17	0	83	43	17

TABLE A4: VALENCIA COUNTY: SELECTED SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED INDICATORS

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	Enroll-ment	Passed Tests (%)	Disabled (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Educa-tion Index	Isolation
CENTRAL	BELEN	264	37	13	8	99	36	11
GIL SANCHEZ	BELEN	330	57	13	16	99	36	10
JARAMILLO	BELEN	404	56	15	13	99	50	11
LA MERCED	BELEN	561	49	16	12	70	18	4
RIO GRANDE	BELEN	285	42	29	15	99	36	20
ANN PARISH	LOS LUNAS	532	42	12	30	99	38	17
BOSQUE FARMS	LOS LUNAS	444	74	9	2	43	48	7
DANIEL FERNANDEZ	LOS LUNAS	272	49	14	30	81	31	7
K. GALLEGOS	LOS LUNAS	384	59	8	8	47	42	1
LOS LUNAS	LOS LUNAS	507	51	12	10	76	40	9
PERALTA	LOS LUNAS	374	64	7	8	62	37	7
RAYMOND GABALDON	LOS LUNAS	351	50	16	5	68	36	9
SUNDANCE	LOS LUNAS	426	65	9	10	54	42	9
TOME	LOS LUNAS	479	42	16	38	99	36	18
VALENCIA	LOS LUNAS	406	54	19	7	63	43	7

FIGURE 4A. PERCENTAGE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THAT PASS STANDARDIZED TESTS IN ALBUQUERQUE AND RIO RANCHO PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS, 2009-2010.
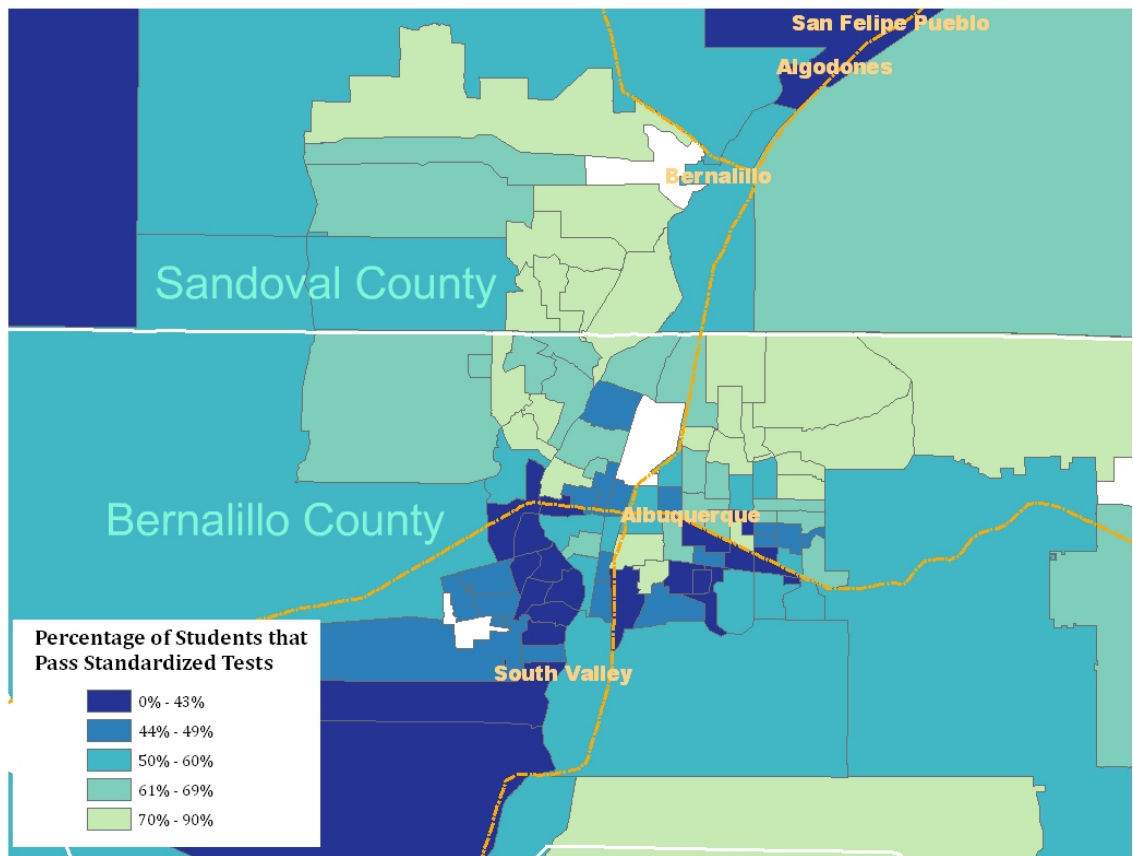
FIGURE 9. PERCENTAGE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN CENTRAL NEW MEXICO, 2009-2010.

English Language Learners
- 0% - 5%
- 6% - 10%
- 10% - 21%
- 22% - 43%
- 43% - 100%