



Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids



A program initiative of the  
**NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

January/February/March 2005

## PROJECT FLECHA

Project Family Leadership for Education, Culture, and Health Care Access (FLECHA) is a curriculum that has been developed with the knowledge that families themselves can make the biggest difference for their children's success – by learning how the health care and education systems work, by using their family and cultural strengths to support their children's journey through early childhood and the school years, and by becoming LEARNING ADVOCATES for their own children and others in their community by getting involved. Louise Kahn, RN, MSN, Certified nurse practitioner developed this curriculum to be piloted with the NM SPARK families and to introduce the concept of the Parent as a Learning Advocate. FLECHA has been introduced in one SPARK site so far and is planned for at least 2 more in the Spring.

## JOINING HANDS PRINCIPLES

Joining Hands is a foundational part of the NM SPARK Project. Each site has developed Joining Hands Teams that work together on transition activities. They include the Elementary School Principal, Kindergarten Teacher and parent and the Child Development Center Lead Teacher, Teacher and parent. They are guided by eight Principles which they have been trained in using.

The 8 Principles are:

- Communication
- Equal Partners/Joint Decision Makers
- Comprehensive and Responsive Services
- Families as Partners
- Knowledge and Skill Development
- Culture and Home Language
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- Assessment of Partnership Effectiveness

## NM SPARK SITES LAUNCH LEADERS

**Happy New Year!** NM SPARK wants to wish everyone a bright 2005.

Our SPARK Sites are taking off with activities for families, teachers, and the communities. Through the Joining Hands Teams, sites are really focusing on the needs of families. Each site has been working on building partnerships within their communities.

These partnerships will support the goals of: 1) Family Engagement 2) Collaboration 3) Best Practices in Early Childhood Settings 4) Best Practices in Elementary Settings, and 5) Policy Initiatives to be developed from this Project.

Here are some examples of site activities that will produce leaders:

**Hobbs** had a very successful advocacy day for families. NM SPARK introduced the FLECHA Project (See Side Bar) to a group of parents and families. The families who participated in this intense day-long session were asked to think about "Becoming a Learning Advocate for your Child" and to reflect on their experience of starting school. When asked...What they learned about being an Advocate for their child? Some of their answers included: "Encourage them, excite them, tell them everything is going to be ok", "How we all have different experiences", "Gives me some ideas on how to go about starting conversations about school."

**Española** The SPARK Site Coordinator in Española, Ana Marie Garcia, did a great training for preschool and kindergarten teachers on "Thinking Big~Best Practices in Early Childhood Settings", and on "Use of the Focused Portfolio in Assessing Young Children". They also received training on "Using

Digital Photography in Early Childhood Settings". Each participating site in Española received a digital camera with "hands-on" training on how to use it!

**Doña Ana** did a training with the NM SPARK Projects Policy contractor, Human Needs Coordinating Council. Families were brought together to learn about being an advocate and a leader in their community. Participants really enjoyed the training and were very glad to be able to share their vision and concerns for their children's education. Chaparral is looking forward to the next training in the "Policy" area which will help the group strategize how to achieve their policy changes.

**Albuquerque** held its annual Learning Circle focusing on Family Engagement and four other SPARK goals. The Albuquerque SPARK sites which include: Child Development Centers, Private Providers, Head Starts, Public Elementary Schools and Parents from all the programs were able to plan activities together related to the Joining Hands Principles. The sites problem solved and thought of ways to include parents in the transition process.

**San Juan County** This site's Joining Hands Training went really well with 70 participants on Dec. 3rd. Participants worked on the principles of transition. The event provided the opportunity for the participants to get to know the many people who are involved in the local SPARK. The training laid the groundwork for the CORE Teams within the triads.

### DON'T FORGET!!

New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children (NMAEYC) Annual Conference is: Saturday, March 5, 2005 Albuquerque Convention Center, Abq, NM [www.nmaeyc.org](http://www.nmaeyc.org) for registration info.

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## MORE LEADERSHIP STORIES FROM SPARK SITES

**Laguna:** The site has been dealing with many changes that come with beginning a new School District. New SPARK Coordinator, Barbara Maxwell, is learning the project at an amazing pace. SPARK Laguna has excelled in joint training

between the Head Start and Elementary staff by participating in the "Mind in the Making" pilot. The participants have really enjoyed sharing with each other.