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SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

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GOVERNOR

December 12, 2014

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Public School Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and REC Directors

**FROM:** Hanna Skandera, Secretary of Education *HS*

**RE: NEW MEXICO'S FOCUS: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF QUALITY FOR PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS AND THE TIERED QUALITY RATING IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM (TQRIS)**

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In 2012, New Mexico's Public Education Department, along with the Children, Youth and Families and Department of Health, were proud recipients of the federal *Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant*.

Over four years, the \$37.5 million dollar grant will support the expansion of the state's current activities to develop and support a coordinated system of early learning and development. These activities are designed to ensure many more children from birth to age five have access to dramatically improved early learning programs, and that they enter schools with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful.

New Mexico has chosen, as its overarching vision, the goal, established by its Early Learning Advisory Council: *"Every child in New Mexico will have an equal opportunity for success in school based upon equitable access to an aligned and high quality early learning system."*

We are confident that our participation in Race to the Top and implementation of the objectives outlined will yield positive results for New Mexico's young children and support their future success in our schools.

The Public Education Department is committed to participate in implementation of *FOCUS: New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)*, which is a system that

includes program criteria by which preschool programs will be measured and a process for program improvement.

Building upon the existing *New Mexico PreK Program* and implementation of the *New Mexico's FOCUS* will provide early childhood program personnel with the criteria, tools and resources necessary to improve the quality of their program. *New Mexico's FOCUS* is under development with the assistance of statewide stakeholders comprised of public school administrators and teachers representing PreK programs, Title I early childhood programs, PreK in charter schools and Part B Special Education early childhood programs. The *New Mexico's FOCUS* will be piloted in selected PreK programs in January 2015. A phase-in implementation will follow beginning in Fall 2015.

For more information on the *New Mexico FOCUS*, please contact Melinda Webster, Director of the Literacy and Early Childhood Bureau at 505-827-6567 or Ann Zuni, PreK Program Manager, Literacy and Early Childhood Bureau at 505-827-6561.

HS/LL/az