



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

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## **Governor Richardson Announces Major Effort to Close the Achievement Gap**

*Governor's Pre K, School Improvement and Advanced Placement Part of "Year of the Child" Legislative Package*

LAS CRUCES -- Governor Bill Richardson today outlined a package of initiatives designed to help close the achievement gap in New Mexico schools.

Governor Richardson, who is making 2006 the "Year of the Child," will work with legislators to continue to expand access to Pre K across the state; create more opportunities for New Mexico students to take Advanced Placement courses; and provide money for low-performing schools to strengthen educational programs, including lengthening the school day and school year.

"Today, as part of our Year of the Child agenda for 2006, we are unveiling a comprehensive package meant to directly tackle – and ultimately close – the unacceptable achievement gap that has characterized New Mexico's schools for far too long," Governor Richardson said during a news conference at Las Cruces Public Schools.

Governor Richardson will propose the following initiatives during the upcoming legislative session that starts in January:

**Advanced Placement** -- A \$2 million expansion in the Advanced Placement program that will provide opportunities for thousands of additional New Mexico students. The Governor wants to reach non-traditional student and rural students. He also wants to expand the training for AP teachers and replace lost federal money for an AP Summer Institute for teachers.

**Pre K** – Continue to phase in voluntary access to Pre K by increasing funding from \$5 million to \$10 million and make it an ongoing part of the budget. Another \$1.5 million in one-time money would be available to help with start-up costs for new programs.

The \$10 million in recurring money will allow the state to continue Pre K funding for the 31 current programs in 50 communities and move forward to create more PreK opportunities for New Mexico families.

**School Improvement** -- Invest \$10 million in a number of innovative strategies, including lengthening the school day and the school year and lowering class sizes, for low performing schools across New Mexico.

**Reading & Math Summer Institutes** -- \$3 million over three years to give teachers access to the most up-to-date, research proven techniques for improving student academic achievement in the areas of reading and math.

**Dropout Prevention** -- \$1 million linked with the Governor's Truancy-Prevention Program to pay for innovative initiatives, such as ENLACE, to decrease dropout rates and increase attendance rates.

**Indian Education** -- \$500,000 for the first comprehensive study of Indian Education, which has not been analyzed, with the exception of the Merriam Report conducted in the early 1900s. The study will help the Public Education Department identify specific areas where Native American students are struggling in order to find lasting solutions to close the achievement gap.

“When I ran for Governor, I promised that I would work tirelessly to move New Mexico forward – by making our schools work and creating better learning opportunities for students,” said Governor Richardson. “Every child deserves a good education and a healthy start in life. We have made much progress on this front – but we must do more to help prepare our children to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

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