New Mexico Study Examines the Effectiveness of A Longer School Year | CDP

A $19 million effort to verify the effectiveness of an extended school year pilot program in New Mexico will soon begin, through a study led by researchers at the Center for Persons with Disabilities. It builds on previous work by Dr. Linda Goetze, an economist and a lead investigator for the project at the CPD who secured the Investing in Innovation grant. The New Mexico K-3 Plus Extended School Year study will help policymakers to understand if—and how—New Mexico’s experiment into extending the school year nets real educational benefits. The validation study involves a team of three USU co-investigators including Goetze, CPD Associate Director Cyndi Rowland and Damon Cann, an assistant professor in USU’s political science department. Additional researchers from New Mexico State University are also involved in the project. The study will collect data on participants in the K-3 Plus Program, which allows students to attend school for an additional 25 days before starting Kindergarten, first, second or third grade. K-3 Plus is a pilot program in New Mexico, currently operated in four local educational associations where 85 percent of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. The study will measure the literacy, numeracy and social skills of students participating in K-3 Plus, as well as the impact the program has on costs and resources in the four local education agencies. Data will be collected over five years, tracking the program’s effectiveness on Kindergarten readiness, school performance and the cumulative effect of the program on students who participate for more than one year. The study will also follow a control group of students who do not participate in K-3 Plus.

This work is significant at a time when policymakers want to ensure that public money is spent effectively, said Goetze. They feel the pull between spending money to providing services and spending money to verify that those services are working. This validation study will help them determine whether the extended school year is a good investment.

Goetze and Rowland hope this study’s implications will reach far beyond New Mexico, as educators grapple with how to keep American students competitive in a global economy.

The study is funded by a $15.3 million federal grant awarded through the Investing in Innovation fund, created through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. A total of $3.8 million in additional matching funds were provided by a collection of private and public donors that gave direct and in-kind support (see the list below).

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