

The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center Is Planning To Open A Nursery School December 8, 2022

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The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center is planning to open a nursery school

BY ALAIÑA NUNCIATED | JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

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Construction on a new early childhood development center in the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center campus is set to start next year, cultural center CEO Michael Canfield announced at an Economic Forum meeting Wednesday morning.

A 7,500-square-foot building will house the development center, which will be located in Awanyu Plaza on the east side of the campus.

"Early childhood development is a critical need in our community. If our kids can't read by the time they're in third grade, they're in trouble," Canfield said. "I think we should look to all of us to solve that problem — and not just PED or APS or whoever — I think we all need to look for ways to ... solve that problem."

Ellen Bernstein, president of the Albuquerque Teachers Federation, said that early childhood development is crucial to set kids up for success in school. Listening and speaking to other people can build the foundation for reading, Bernstein, who taught second and third grade, said.

"They always say 'Play is a child's work,'" Bernstein said. "What kids learn during play is phenomenal — structured and supervised play just leads kids to their skill base in language."



Besides helping with literacy, early childhood education teaches kids how to share, cooperate and take turns.

"These social skills are built at an early age," Bernstein said.

Canfield said the need for quality early child education in tribal communities, as well as Albuquerque as a whole, is great.

"Early child education and care is a need that's been identified throughout the state as pretty critical," Canfield said. "When we look specifically at our community, geographically, and at our Native population in Albuquerque, the need is even greater."

Construction on the center is estimated to be finished in late 2023 or early 2024. It is likely to be able to enroll sometime in 2024.



Canfield said at this point in time, it's uncertain what age group will be served by the center. He said that the center will likely be open to all children in the area, although the center will include Indigenous cultural education.

"This project builds upon the cultural center's previous educational work. Several years ago, the center developed the [Indigenous Pueblo](#) K-12 curriculum with the help of educators and Pueblo activists. The curriculum covers New Mexico history with a focus on the economic, political and social history of the state's 19 Pueblo nations.

"I went to APS and I never learned about the Pueblo Revolt," Canfield said. "It's time that we teach our children all of the history about New Mexico, not just one side of it."

Next year, the BVC is also starting construction on its Entrepreneur Complex, which will cover three acres and incorporate an existing classroom and pueblo house. It will also include the center's Resilience Garden, which is maintained with traditional Pueblo farming techniques.

Construction on the 7,500-square-foot facility, which will house a commercial kitchen, learning kitchen and produce processing area, is expected to wrap up in spring 2024. The cultural center is currently fundraising for the complex with a capital campaign. Canfield said center leaders are hoping to raise at least \$2.5 million for the project.

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December 8, 2022 9:11 AM

