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MY VIEW WILLIAM E. GARCIA

A name change but a laser focus on early childhood

By William E. Garcia

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As a 15th-generation New Mexican who has spent over 50 years in the business community, and as someone who has a great pride in New Mexico, I have long worked to improve the outcomes of our educational metrics. Why? Because it impacts how we attract more and better jobs for our state.

Lots of reasons are cited for our educational shortcomings, but one that I believe is foremost is poverty and the impact poverty plays in stunting the growth of our children. As a board member of United Way of Santa Fe County, I have seen success in the work that this organization has been doing in early childhood education. As a board member, I have become convinced one of the best things we can do as a state is to focus on educating young children.

When we focus on teaching children very early in life how to learn, quite simply, it works. As one of my fellow board members put it so aptly: “These kids are starting out behind others, we are just giving them a boost so they can catch up.”

There are volumes of studies that have been done that support this notion. If we work early enough in a child’s development, we can make big differences in their ability to learn once they get into kindergarten and beyond. Better development, better grades, real learning and motivation all work to improve our potential for economic growth and development.

The United Way Board of Santa Fe County recently decided to move forward with greater emphasis on this initiative and change its name to more accurately reflect our mission — we are going to be known from here on as Growing Up New Mexico: The Early Childhood Partnership.

On Monday we are launching this name change, but want the community to know that while we are changing our name, we remain focused on our mission. We hope our neighbors will continue

to support our work within the Santa Fe community as well as the work of promoting more statewide support of investing in this significant work. It is a great strategy for improving our economic development and job growth.

William E. (Bill) Garcia is a retired businessman who is a member of the United Way of Santa Fe board of directors. He has been a senior manager with US West telecom, Intel and served as the Cabinet secretary of economic development (1991-94). Currently, Garcia serves as a regent at New Mexico Highlands University.