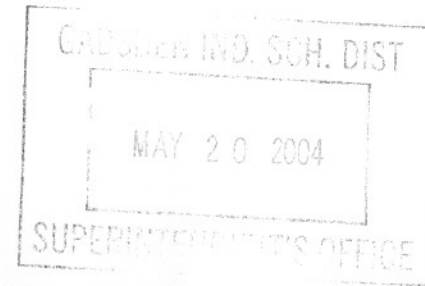




STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
300 DON GASPAR
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786
Telephone (505) 827-5800
www.ped.state.nm.us



DR. VERONICA C. GARCÍA
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

BILL RICHARDSON
Governor

May 7, 2004

Mr. Ronald Haugen, Superintendent
Gadsden Independent Schools
P.O. Drawer 70
Anthony, NM 88021

Dear Mr. Haugen and Distinguished Guests:

I sincerely regret that I am unable to join you as planned on this very special occasion.

First, I want to thank each and every one of you for enlightening our children and broadening their worlds. In my opinion, there is not a more noble mission or a greater achievement than that.

We hear a lot of talk today about quality teachers. In the world of *No Child Left Behind*, that person is defined by degrees held and in what content areas. But quality is about more than that. It is about excellence, character and enthusiasm. And it is about the ability to take children to the next level of learning.

I know what these words mean when it comes to teaching, because it was a teacher who found me as a young girl and empowered me to succeed. She was my inspiration. I also know that in your classrooms are children, just as I was, who are being inspired and given a role model for their future calling in education.

It is clear that quality learning requires quality teaching. In the past year, we have done much to attract and keep quality teachers in New Mexico. Three-tiered licensure and increases in teacher pay are just two examples.

But there is so much more to be done. We must do our utmost to support the people on the front lines, who are the backbone of our educational system, who are in a unique position to positively influence our children and who wake up every day committed to their success.

Each of you speaks to the magic of teaching. I urge you to continue to share the magic!

Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica C. Garcia" followed by a stylized, circular flourish.

Dr. Veronica C. Garcia
Secretary of Education