

2017 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

◆ **Dr. Veronica C. García** ◆

H. Councill Trenholm Award (Black)



Dr. Veronica García currently serves as the Superintendent of the Santa Fe Public Schools in New Mexico. She has been a leading advocate for public education and children, especially disadvantaged children from poor families, in the state for more than four decades. As an educator and advocate, hers has been a remarkable career.

It began in the 1970s as a teacher in the Albuquerque Public Schools. From 1980 to 1986, García coordinated 55 special education programs and related services for the Albuquerque Public Schools, and then became Assistant Director of Special Education for the district. She became a school principal in 1989 and then in 1995 an Assistant Superintendent for the district.

She served as Superintendent of the Santa Fe Public Schools (the first time) from 1999 to 2002, and received her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque in 2003, 30 years after having received her B.A. from the same institution.

Dr. García served as the state's first Cabinet Secretary of Education from 2003 to 2010, during Governor Bill Richardson's administration. After that she was the Executive Director of New Mexico Voices for Children where she advocated for the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, in particular its poor Latino and Indian children. In this role she collaborated with a wide variety of individuals and organizations, including NEA-New Mexico.

Returning last to the position of Superintendent in Santa Fe, Dr. García addressed the fears and anxieties of many people after the Presidential election, issuing a statement that said in part:

"Our District stands together with our families. We believe in creating school communities that demonstrate unconditional regard and respect for everyone. We are called upon to be compassionate and respectful of others; to provide support to those who are experiencing high levels of stress and trauma; to create safe school communities that are welcoming and safe. We know that in order for our students to achieve their potential, schools must continue to keep the focus on teaching and learning while ensuring that our students feel safe, secure, and welcome."

In addition to reassuring the community, Dr. García took these concrete steps: She established a student support hotline so students and parents could report incidences of bullying and harassment as well as a Superintendent's Equity Advisory Council to focus on the concerns of immigrants, LGBT students, Native Americans, Special Ed student, and other groups that feel under-attack.

Says Eduardo Holguín, former NEA-New Mexico President: "Veronica García's actions and words the first few months as Santa Fe Superintendent show she's continuing her role as a statewide leader and advocate for all of New Mexico's children."