



CONVENTION RELEASE

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S.F. Superintendent leads charge to close achievement gap

SACRAMENTO – Carlos Garcia, superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District, electrified attendees this morning at the California State PTA’s 111th Annual Convention.

“The civil rights issue of today is the achievement gap,” said Garcia, calling it an unacceptable “opportunity gap.” He put the issue in personal terms, with recollections of going to a school in Los Angeles where his kindergarten teacher insisted on calling him “Charlie,” a name he didn’t even recognize.

The son of immigrant parents who had little education, he was placed in special education classes in elementary school because he didn’t speak English. Fluency in multiple languages should be seen as an asset, he said, especially in a global economy.

Instead, we operate in an educational system that sees fluency in languages other than English as a detriment. It is the result, he said, of relying on a “deficit model” that focuses on what children cannot do rather than building on what they can do.

Garcia described his own school district as one with the highest scores of any urban district in the nation, but also the widest achievement gap.

The superintendent called on PTA delegates to stay focused on the association’s statewide effort to close the achievement gap.