



San Francisco Board of Education Parent Advisory Council

Expanding Access to High Quality Afterschool Programs

For years the PAC has listened to concerns about access to high quality afterschool programs. These programs are very important to families, for different and multiple reasons:

- Most working **parents need a safe place** for their child to be after school
- Beyond keeping their children safe, many parents rely on afterschool programs to provide **academic support**, as well as art, sports, and other **enrichment activities** that aren't available during their school day
- Families whose first **language is other than English** emphasize the need for a program to **help their children with homework**
- Many parents note that afterschool programs give their children an opportunity to **develop important friendships** across divisions in their school-day classes.

Through community forums, focus group conversations, and a telephone survey that reached over a thousand SFUSD parents, we also learned that families face many challenges in finding adequate afterschool care for their children:

- There is a **bewildering set of afterschool programs** across the district: some schools have more than one program on-site, and there are many off-campus programs
- During the enrollment process, **detailed information isn't available** about eligibility criteria or availability of space in afterschool programs – and **parents struggle to choose** schools without that information
- There is almost **no information available** in languages **other than English**; and even parents who speak English **struggle to find information** about program options
- Many families whose children **aren't eligible for free**, school-based ExCEL programs **cannot afford the private programs** on-site or off-campus
- **Program quality is uneven**, even among different programs at the same school site, and there are **no clear standards** for programs across the district
- There is **very little accountability** for how well afterschool programs serve our school communities.

Since 2007 the PAC has been working in partnership with the Afterschool For All Advisory Council – with SFUSD staff, city agencies, afterschool program providers, parent advocates and community funders – to promote expanding high quality afterschool programs in San Francisco.

The PAC has presented our findings of family needs for afterschool programs to the Board of Education (please see our **May 2009 report**, available on our website). We are currently developing formal recommendations for expanding access to high quality programs.

Policy Implications

The PAC recognizes that we need to delve more deeply into the information gathered through this research – especially to learn more about differences in program participation and unmet needs among different socioeconomic, language and ethnic groups. We do have some immediate, practical recommendations for the SFUSD to improve access to afterschool programs for families across the district:

- Provide much more **detailed information about afterschool programs** – including ExCEL eligibility criteria & program openings – in school **site materials** & the **enrollment guide**
- **Practice better communication** with families – including written materials and staff who can communicate in languages other than English
- Increase district and principal **accountability** for on-site afterschool **program quality and accessibility**
- **Continue collaboration & planning** with the Afterschool For All Advisory Council.

Next Steps for the PAC

The PAC's next steps on this project are to:

- Look at school-site Balanced Scorecards to learn more about what's working and what's needed to increase access and improve site-based afterschool programs
- Participate in Afterschool For All Advisory Council initiatives addressing financing, program quality, and work-force development
- Develop formal, specific policy recommendations for the SFUSD to **expand access to high-quality afterschool programs.**