



# San Francisco Board of Education Parent Advisory Council

## Report to the Board of Education

October 25, 2011

The role of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is to represent parent voices and perspectives to inform Board of Education policy decisions. This report addresses the PAC's work to develop plans for engaging parents in several key district initiatives - and the ongoing need for improved communication with families.

### Developing Plans for Community Engagement

PAC members have been meeting in project teams to develop scenarios for community conversations about district initiatives. The PAC is thinking hard to define the issues we believe are the most important to bring to families, and the questions we want to ask of them - in order to provide meaningful and strategic feedback to the Board of Education and district staff.

As part of that process we are meeting with Board of Education commissioners and district staff to talk about the Core Curriculum standards and assessments; plans for improving middle schools; the implementation of Restorative Practices; plans for aligning SFUSD-managed afterschool programs; and ideas for engaging parents to strengthen these initiatives.

PAC members are discussing all of these issues, and we have identified questions that we know many parents across the district share, including:

- How is the Core Curriculum related to the Common Learning Assessments (CLAs) and the California Standards tests? How are "assessments" different from "tests"?
- How are these assessments being used to support and improve teaching?
- How is this information being shared with parents, to help them understand how their children are doing and ways to support their children's success?
- How are teachers being engaged in the process of developing and evaluating the district's initiatives, including new standards and materials related to the Core Curriculum, conducting CLA assessments, and the shift to Restorative Practices? How are teachers and principals supported to implement these new strategies?
- How will changing the way afterschool programs are managed affect the way families experience these programs? Will the new programs have the capacity to serve all the families who need a school site-based afterschool program?
- What are some specific strategies for the district to strengthen middle schools, so that the new feeder patterns provide equitable access to popular programs? What is the timeline for implementing these strategies? How will parents learn about them?

## **Strengthening Communication**

The PAC has been discussing the district's priorities since the beginning of this school year. The more we learn from SFUSD staff and Board of Education commissioners, the more we realize how important it is that parents learn about these initiatives.

The PAC formally recommends that the district develop a clear communications plan to provide information to families about the new curriculum standards and how teachers are using ongoing assessments to support their children's academic growth. This plan should be in place by January, to ensure parents have the information they need during this school year.

Detailed information about the Common Core standards and the use of Common Learning Assessments (CLAs) should be available on the district's website for people who are interested in learning more about the bigger picture of how these strategies are being used across the district. Basic information mentioning the core curriculum is available, but the details are not.

Even more importantly, every family should be given information based on these CLAs, about how their children are doing, what they might be struggling with or excel in, and ideas for how to support them. That should happen in parent-teacher conferences but it should also happen more often, where kids might be falling behind and need additional support to stay on track.

## **Next Steps**

PAC members are working hard on these projects. Our next steps include:

- Invite the district's coordinator for Restorative Practices to the next PAC meeting, to describe the implementations plans and strategize about possible community engagement to support these plans.
- Meet with people at schools that are implementing Restorative Practices this year (as demonstration schools or based on their own school model): Rosa Parks ES, SF Community School, James Lick MS, Everett MS and Wallenberg HS.
- Meet with SFUSD staff leading efforts to align the district's afterschool programs, including managers of the ExCEL and Early Childhood Education programs.
- Participate in the Program Quality and Financing workgroups of the city's Afterschool for All Advisory Council, to bring parent perspectives to these efforts and identify issues to bring back to the PAC.

*If you have any questions or comments about this report, or the PAC's work in general, please contact the PAC at (415) 355-2201, or at [pac@sfusd.edu](mailto:pac@sfusd.edu). You can also visit our website at [www.pacsf.org](http://www.pacsf.org)*