



San Francisco Board of Education
Parent Advisory Council

Report to the Board of Education

April 27, 2010

Last week was a busy one for the PAC: we hosted a parent meeting with US Department of Education Deputy Secretary Tony Miller; then in the PAC's regular monthly meeting reflected on our work over this school year, and set priorities for the next few months.

Parent Forum with Secretary Miller

With only a week's notice, the PAC was able to convene a gathering of over 50 parents and parent advocates, who met with Secretary Miller on April 20th. The meeting was held at City Hall, and we appreciate Commissioner Hydra Mendoza both for connecting Secretary Miller's office with the PAC and for arranging the Mayor's Conference room for the forum.

The parent meeting was moving, but a bit frustrating. It was exciting to see that in less than a week, the parent network was able to get the word out to many different school communities about the opportunity to meet with a national education policy-maker.

Parent liaisons played an important role in this effort, and helped bring families from schools in the Bayview, Mission, Visitacion Valley and Excelsior communities. The district PTA, Parents for Public Schools, and Coleman Advocates also played a role in reaching out to invite parents and raising important questions for Secretary Miller.

One frustrating aspect was there wasn't enough time to frame the discussion to ensure we could cover all the questions parents have about new federal education policy. At the same time, the meeting was an authentic and unrehearsed conversation among a diverse group of parents and education advocates. Despite the challenges, several issues were raised that we believe will help federal policymakers understand how their proposed reforms are being experienced in our communities.

We know that many parents from SFUSD schools on the state list of "persistently under-performing schools" have come before the Board of Education to express their concerns about the four reform models being mandated by the state for the schools on their list. Many of the participants in the meeting with Secretary Miller were from those schools, and asked him questions about the US Department of Education's role in these reforms.

It became clear that much of the confusion about which changes are being mandated, and which are optional, stems from how the state of California is communicating about these issues. While it was disappointing that Secretary Miller could not resolve many parents' concerns, the meeting was successful in stressing to Secretary Miller the importance of clearing up the confusion between state and federal reform guidelines.

Commissioner Mendoza has offered to help follow up on additional questions participants had hoped to discuss with Secretary Miller. We look forward to continued discussion about federal education reforms - especially those that will bring additional resources to our schools!

The PAC's Priorities

At the PAC meeting last week we set priorities for the next two months. After reflecting on our work this year, PAC members formed project teams to develop action plans focused on:

- ***Recruiting and nominating new candidates*** for the PAC, who we will propose for appointment at the Board of Education meeting on June 8th
- ***Building strategies to effectively engage communities*** that have been harder for the PAC to communicate and work with, to improve our outreach next year
- ***Strengthening mechanisms for teacher and administrator standards, support and accountability***, aligned with the district's Balanced Scorecard and the Parent Engagement Plan being developed this year
- ***Working with the Afterschool For All Advisory Council*** on the alignment of district-managed afterschool programs, to expand access to high-quality, affordable programs
- ***Revising the PAC's by-laws and operations guides*** to align with the district's P120 rules for advisory committees and to strengthen our infrastructure.

We'll share these action plans with you as we develop specific goals and objectives for these projects, which we aim to implement over the next year.

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. You can visit us at www.pacsf.org