



# San Francisco Board of Education Parent Advisory Council

## Report to the Board of Education

December 8, 2009

This report describes our support for the work of the Community Advisory Committee on Special Education, as well as the PAC's work with our partners to engage our communities to address the budget cuts we know our district is facing.

### **Support for the Community Advisory Committee on Special Education**

Over the past year and a half, the PAC has been working to build our relationship with the CAC for Special Education. We recognize the incredible dedication of the CAC's members, especially as they do not have staff support to organize or coordinate their work. We applaud the quality and breadth of the work they accomplish despite this significant challenge.

We believe it is important that the PAC understands and represents the needs of Special Education students as part of our overall work. We appreciate the support of CAC members in helping us learn more about the issues affecting students in Special Education.

### **Community Engagement in Addressing the Budget Crisis**

As the PAC has mentioned in previous reports this fall, we are beginning to work with other parents in the district, including the PTA and Parents for Public Schools, to strategize on what community engagement in the budget process might look like, and identify our next steps.

In these initial conversations we've identified several key goals for community engagement:

- Inform parents/guardians, students, and our communities about how serious the situation is – and how bad the cuts are going to be
- Help connect families to state-wide advocacy efforts aimed at reducing the cuts to public education, pre-K through college
- Bring parent voices and represent parent perspectives to the Board of Education and SFUSD staff, to make the district's budget process more transparent, and to inform the Board's decision-making process around the budget.

The PAC, along with PPS and members of the San Francisco District PTA, have met with Deputy Superintendent Myong Leigh and Gentle Blythe from the Office of Public Communication, to discuss ideas for community engagement. One specific idea we're considering is to begin by engaging our school communities in the budget process at the School Site Council Summit. We realize some schools might already be talking about specific strategies for their own sites, but

the Summit is a place we could work together and share information – because the Summit includes principals, teachers and other staff, as well as parents. These discussions would also put budget issues in the context of the district and school site Balanced Scorecards.

We feel the best way to confront this crisis is to be clear about the district’s priorities, and to talk creatively about how to support these priorities. Although we are deeply concerned about the impact of budget cuts on our district’s most vulnerable students, we look forward to working with our community partners and district staff to address these critical issues.

**Statement from Michelle Parker, Legislation Chair for the 2<sup>nd</sup> District PTA (San Francisco)**

The District PTA is committed to being a voice for every child of this great city. We have formed a legislation advocacy team (called the “A Team”) comprised of parents throughout the city, and are partnering with the Parent Advisory Council to the Board of Education, Parents for Public Schools, and staff from SFUSD to accomplish these goals:

- Create awareness of the power of parent involvement in advocating for strong legislation supporting children and youth, using California State PTA legislative priorities and position statements as a guide
- Understand and be informed of local and state issues regarding children and youth, and be an information resource and support for San Francisco families through school community outreach
- Lead advocacy campaigns as necessary
- Create educational opportunities to empower parents and caregivers to act as advocates for their children
- Motivate the members of our great city to ACT and make a difference in the lives of our most precious resource and the future of our state- the children

This group is currently focused on the unprecedented cuts to education and sending a clear message to our lawmakers in Sacramento that they simply cannot cut education funding anymore. It is time to find a long-term solution and invest in children. We will urge them to do what we elected them to do. They must find ways to increase revenue or make cuts elsewhere and realize that enough is enough.

We are excited to work with a group of such capable and smart people, and look forward to building partnerships with more organizations that have the same goals. There is a great strength in numbers and we believe we can help make a difference.

*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 us at [www.pacsf.org](http://www.pacsf.org)*