



San Francisco Board of Education
Parent Advisory Council

Report to the Board of Education

February 9, 2010

Later tonight there will be the first reading of the Superintendent's proposal for a new student assignment system. Last week the PAC and Parents for Public Schools presented our joint recommendations for student assignment, based on what we heard from nearly 600 parents and community members earlier this winter as well as data presented by Stanford researchers.

We are eager to learn more details about the proposals being considered, and how a new system might meet the district's goals of supporting academic diversity and equitable access to educational opportunities across the city – while facilitating parents to choose schools they feel will work for their families. We wonder how deeply and broadly these details can be discussed, given there is only one more meeting scheduled for the Board's committee on student assignment before a new system is scheduled to be adopted on March 9th.

At the same time, the PAC is moving forward on two other major issues before the Board of Education, which we feel are even more urgent than redesigning student assignment, and which need to be addressed no matter which student assignment system you adopt:

- Leading community engagement to inform the district's budget process, including support for the School Site Council Summit on February 20, and
- Advocating for initiatives that support student achievement by addressing teacher and administrator assignment, standards, and accountability.

During the community conversations this winter we found that even when parents expressed appreciation for our bringing them information about redesigning student assignment and the opportunity to express their opinions, they also voiced their concerns the district is not listening to them – and we understand why.

During these conversations we heard many of the same questions and concerns we have reported to the Board of Education and district staff based on previous community engagement initiatives. We have not seen the community's concerns reflected in the Board's discussions on student assignment, and the lack of transparency of important details about the proposed systems only deepens parents' concerns that a new system will be adopted without their input being taken into consideration.

Many people expressed their concerns that the same thing will happen as the district confronts the budget crisis the state is plunging us all into, and that important decisions will be made

without parents, students, or teachers being given enough information about – or the ability to weigh in on – the tradeoffs being made.

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 2, the President of the Board of Parents for Public Schools, Matt Keleman, said that it is “past time for the Board to give the same visibility, urgency and consistent attention” to what our district is doing to create quality schools in all parts of the city as you are giving to changing student assignment. The PAC wholeheartedly agrees with this statement, and having an open and transparent process to address the budget crisis is one critical place to start.

We urge the district to slow down the process for making decisions about budget cuts, to ensure that community participation in the process over the next few months can actually inform your decisions. We understand the March 15 deadline for issuing layoff notices, and deeply regret the pain and uncertainty that process causes. At the same time, we must take the time to ensure this process is as transparent as possible, and that school sites have as much say as possible.

We look forward to working on these issues together, and we hope to see you at community forums about the district’s budget process during March and April – as well as at the School Site Council Summit on February 20th, the “Funding Our Future” Town Hall meeting on February 25th, and events during the March 4th statewide “Day of Action to Defend Public Education.”

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 also visit us at www.pacsf.org