



San Francisco Board of Education
Parent Advisory Council

Report to the Board of Education

March 23, 2010

This report focuses on the Superintendent's Budget Action Plan, and concerns that the Board has not been given enough information or time to consider the impact of the proposed measures for balancing our district's budget.

The PAC understands the time constraints confronting the district on the whole and every public school in the city, and the Superintendent's desire to give schools time this spring to develop plans for how they will function next year with dramatically fewer resources.

At the same time, we believe that before you adopt a Budget Action Plan and move forward to implement it, Board commissioners - and the school community on the whole - need to have more clarity about the impact of the cuts on the table. We have heard many parents and community members urge the district to consider alternative proposals, and we hope that you take the time to do so.

Below are a number of issues in the proposed plan, or topics raised by Board members in the March 16 meeting as a Committee of the Whole, that we believe need to be considered before the Board adopts a Budget Action Plan.

- We are glad to see the Guiding Principles presented by the staff at the Committee of the Whole on March 16. We have questions about how specific elements of the proposed budget would be aligned with these principles, especially in terms of supporting students with the highest needs, and prioritizing services that directly impact achievement.
- We have heard the proposal to change how Targeted Instructional Improvement block grant (aka Consent Decree) funds are allocated, to ensure that schools with higher concentrations of under-served students receive more of that money. That makes sense as a principle, but information needs to be made available about how the changes will be decided, and which schools will continue to receive these funds.
- We recognize the district may need to cut transportation, and to make the system more efficient. We support exploring a way to charge families who can afford to pay for the convenience of school buses rather than relying on Muni. However, when cutting bus routes it's crucial to look at issues of equity, access and alternatives – so that students who cannot pay, and whose neighborhoods are not well served by Muni, can still get to school.

- One issue raised last week in relation to cutting transportation was the possibility of changing school start times – including the idea to have high schools start at 9am. This might be a great proposal, for many reasons besides the bus schedule. But changing start times would have an enormous impact on students, families, school staff, and community programs aligned with the school schedule. **School communities need to be part of this discussion from the beginning.**

Whether the Board adopts the Action Plan currently proposed, a revised version or a completely different approach, we know that many staff positions will be reduced or lost altogether. It's critical to make sure that the people who are kept in their positions – whether at school sites or in the central office – are effective in supporting student learning, and are held accountable for meeting their responsibilities and standards. "Accountability" is one of the key priorities in the Balanced Scorecard, and is more important than ever.

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