



San Francisco Board of Education Parent Advisory Council

Report to the Board of Education

October 27, 2009

This report addresses the PAC's work with SFUSD staff and Parents for Public Schools to engage parents and families, educators, students and community members in conversations about changes to the student assignment system.

The overall goals of this community engagement on the student assignment redesign are to:

- **Build community understanding** about student achievement, the SFUSD's strategic plan, and how proposed changes to student assignment support the district's priorities
- **Hear community responses, questions, concerns and suggestions** about the possible models for a new student assignment system
- **Inform the Board's decision** on a new student assignment system.

Opportunities and Objectives for Community Engagement

The PAC is working with Parents for Public Schools and SFUSD staff to **provide different ways for our communities to be engaged** in the student assignment redesign process:

- **SFUSD staff** will host up to **five larger-scale public forums**; convene **focus groups with students and educators**; and post an **online survey**. They will also inform civic leaders and community organizations about the process, and **offer to lead small group discussions** as requested.
- **The PAC and PPS** will actively reach out to engage parents in **smaller, community-based** conversations. Our goal is to **hear from 200 parents**, guardians and community members, **through 25 community conversations** convened through schools and community centers across the city.
- The **PAC prioritizes reaching out to hear from families who don't come to speak at school board meetings**, and whose children are the **most impacted by the district's achievement gap**. We are working with schools, parent groups, and community organizations to hear from parents who reflect the different grade-levels, economic backgrounds, ethnicities and languages of our school populations.
- **The PAC and PPS will also publicize and support the district's public forums** through our own networks, so that anyone who wants to participate in the process will have the opportunity.

| Ways to Participate: | Public Forums | Focus Groups and Community Conversations | Surveys |
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| <i>Size</i> | Large group | Small groups of 10-20 people | |
| <i>Location</i> | At 555 Franklin St. and possibly in neighborhoods | Schools and community centers throughout the city | Online |
| <i>Format – will be the same in all conversations</i> | <p>Inform: Present information about student achievement, the Board’s priorities for student assignment, measures of success, and the options being considered.</p> <p>Engage: Using guiding questions, discuss and document questions, concerns and suggestions about the current options – as well as additional issues for the Board to consider.</p> | | Use the same open-ended questions being asked at the community conversations (not a ranking or voting process). |

Timeline for Community Engagement

We aim to start community conversations in early November, to get as many as possible scheduled before winter break in late December. **In late January we will share the findings** with you as part of your process to decide on a new student assignment system.

Right now we’re working together with SFUSD staff and PPS to develop a discussion guide that presents the six conceptual models for a new system, identifies tradeoffs and benefits of the different models, and frames a discussion to hear our communities’ questions, concerns, and suggestions about a new system for student assignment.

Later this week we’re having two sessions with parents and community members to test the presentation and discussion guide, to help us revise it and improve our explanation of the issues and the models the Board is considering.

Challenges in Engaging our Communities

There are two main challenges for us in this important initiative:

- The models, evaluation measures, and issues to discuss are very complicated! As we work on the discussion guide, we find that it’s very difficult to talk about the models and evaluation measures in a meaningful way, and have it be done in about 90 minutes.
- Given the Board’s goal to present the first reading of a new system by early February, we are confronting the fact that there isn’t enough time to do the extensive outreach needed to hear from the parents who are the hardest to reach.

It takes a significant amount of time to build relationships with the community leaders, organizations and agencies who could help us reach parents who don't participate in the enrollment process now, or who don't feel comfortable coming to meetings at their children's schools.

While it may not be possible to complete this outreach as part of the community engagement in changing the student assignment system, the PAC does aim to work on building the relationships needed to help us hear from parents about other district issues in the future.

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