



# San Francisco Board of Education Parent Advisory Council

## **Year-End Report to the Board of Education**

June 28, 2011

The role of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is to represent parent voices and perspectives to inform Board of Education policy decisions. This report summarizes the PAC's work and accomplishments during the 2010-2011 school year, and notes issues that we will take up again in the fall. The last page of this report has a chart showing the specific goals and achievements of the PAC over this year.

The SFUSD's website describes thirteen initiatives to achieve the district's overall priorities of student achievement, equitable access to educational opportunity, and accountability. The PAC fully supports these priorities and focused our work this year to engage parents in several of these initiatives. As this school year ended, we were concerned that many parents informed us they are not seeing consistently high standards, effective instruction to close the achievement gap, or "social justice" in practice at their children's schools.

### **The PAC's Priorities for 2010-2011**

The PAC's work is closely aligned with the goals of the SFUSD's Balanced Scorecard, and is shaped by what we've learned over the past several years through reaching out to hear from families across the city. At the beginning of the school year PAC members reviewed the district's strategic initiatives for the year before setting our priorities, which included:

- Community engagement in middle school quality, program placement and assignment
- Parent engagement in the School Improvement Grant/Superintendent's Zone schools
- Informing changes to SFUSD transportation policy
- Addressing teacher and administrator standards, support, and accountability
- Supporting implementation of the Parent Engagement Plan
- Expanding access to afterschool and aligning SFUSD afterschool programs.

### **Community Engagement in Building Quality Middle Schools**

The PAC worked closely with district staff and Parents for Public Schools over most of the school year to plan and conduct community forums about district proposals for developing "K-8 pathways" to improve middle schools.

Our overall goals for this initiative were to:

- **Increase middle school quality** for all students
- **Strengthen implementation** of the new policies and systems
- **Build trust** between the Board of Education, the school district, parents and the community, by engaging the community in a transparent process.

PAC members have mixed feelings about the success of this community engagement initiative. Looking at objective measures, we know **we accomplished an enormous project**:

- Working with our partners **the PAC engaged over 900 parents, educators and community members** in discussions about proposals for student assignment, expanding language pathways, and other issues related to supporting middle school students.
- Together **we conducted 12 community forums and 7 targeted focus groups** that **directly engaged over 850 participants** to discuss proposal for student assignment, expanding language pathways, and other issues.
- The PAC also helped develop and lead **two community updates and workshops** to help shape the community forums, where over **60 parents, teachers, principals and other community leaders** shared their questions and suggestions for conducting the forums.
- Following the community meetings, the PAC led a process among parent leaders to develop the report of Findings, develop recommendations to the Board that included the reflections and suggestions of our parent partners in this process, and present these findings and recommendations to the Board and other district leaders.

However, looking at the other goals for this initiative, we feel **the proposals put forward** by district staff and adopted by the Board of Education **did not reflect our recommendations or address many of the questions raised** by community members who participated in the forums.

Based on discussions at the forums and following the Board's decision, we believe this initiative **did not achieve the objective of building trust** for the district among families and the community. For many parents the changing presentation of the district's proposals, lack of consistency in responding to questions, and missed deadlines for providing information that had been promised, **has resulted in having less trust and confidence in the district** than before.

To PAC members - and many parents in the community - it appears that district staff and the Board of Education **ignored the community's questions related to equitable access to electives and language programs, resource issues, and the lack of clear implementation plans** to improve school quality. This is very discouraging - especially because of the amount of time, effort and resources we all put into this initiative, to the detriment of other important issues we had hoped to focus on this year.

## **Strengthening Systems for Communication and Parent Engagement**

One project that PAC members were able to focus on was working with the district PTA and Parents for Public Schools to develop a Parent Concerns Tool-Kit, with information and resources to help parents understand how to address concerns about their child's school. The objectives of the Tool-Kit are to:

- Map out the process for raising concerns so it's consistently understood by all parties involved (students, parents, school staff, district administrators, and the community)
- Provide tools to help parents navigate the system and achieve an acceptable outcome
- Create accountability and transparency throughout all steps of the process.

Volunteers from the three organizations worked together to develop draft materials for the Tool-Kit, designed specifically to help families navigate the process of communicating their concerns through the most appropriate, effective channels.

As part of this process, parents met with SFUSD staff and UESF leadership to make sure the materials were accurate and in line with district policy and labor agreements. We conducted several focus groups to test the materials, including meeting with the district's parent liaisons.

In April parents presented the draft Tool-Kit to the Superintendent's Cabinet and turned over the materials - and responsibility for finalizing and implementing them - to district staff. Deputy Superintendent Carranza **committed to making the Tool-Kit available on the district's website** in English, Chinese and Spanish **by the start of the school year**, and to distribute hard copies of the materials to all schools. In addition, district staff framing the agenda for the Administrators' Institute in late July **committed to including the revised Tool-Kit** in the section on effective parent engagement **as part of that Institute**.

## **Representing Parent Voices to District Leaders**

To convey what we learn from speaking with families across the district, PAC members present regular reports to the Board of Education, meet with individual Board Commissioners, and have been developing relationships with key district staff. Over this school year, the PAC:

- Attended and presented a report at all but two regular meetings of the Board of Education (in March, when PAC members were facilitating community forums)
- Attended and participated in meetings of the Board's Curriculum committee and the Ad-Hoc Committee on Student Assignment
- Met individually with Board commissioners, Deputy Superintendents Myong Leigh and Richard Carranza, and other district staff to discuss specific policy initiatives including changes to transportation policy, implementing the Restorative Practices initiative, and implementation of the district's plan for parent engagement.

## Participating in Parent & Public Education Community Networks

- For several years the PAC has played a leadership role in the Parent Involvement Coalition, which was convened by the SFUSD's Office of School-Family Partnership. Members included Coleman Advocates, Parents for Public Schools, Chinese for Affirmative Action, the district PTA, Support for Families of Children with Disabilities, the CAC for Special Education, Mission Graduates, the SF Education Fund, and the SF Family Support Network.
- The district stopped convening the PIC in December 2010, and it is not clear to us what the plans are for forming a new team of district staff and community groups to focus on parent engagement. In the meantime, the PAC has participated in a new collaboration of community advocates organized by Mission Graduates to support parent leadership development and engagement in Mission district schools.
- Members and staff of the PAC also participate in regular meetings of community-based organizations and district staff working to support efforts in the Bayview Zone. While we support the goals and objectives of the Superintendent Zone initiatives, the PAC remains concerned about the confusion and miscommunication that has plagued these initiatives for the past year. As we reported to the Board in January 2011, "Clear channels of communication need to be established with families, the community, teachers and other district staff, about the plans, timelines, measurable objectives and process for evaluating how well the SIG and Superintendent Zone initiatives are working." **We have yet to see this information in a parent-friendly format.**

## Sustaining the Parent Advisory Council

The PAC has been successful in building an active membership and strengthening its systems for planning and implementing its program goals, and for reaching out to communicate with families. The PAC's organizational achievements over the past year include:

- Renewing annual support from our major funders, the Walter & Elise Haas Fund and the Zellerbach Family Foundation. This funding has allowed us to maintain staff at .75 FTE, to coordinate communication and projects led by the all-volunteer PAC membership.
- Continuing fiscal sponsorship by Community Initiatives, which allows the PAC staff to focus on program efforts rather than on administrative issues.
- Recruiting seven new members to the PAC, and retaining nearly all of the current PAC membership whose terms had not expired, as well as three members who committed to a second two-year term.
- Improving the PAC's website at [www.pacsf.org](http://www.pacsf.org), which provides a way for us to make more information available to parents (in English, Spanish and Chinese) while remaining linked to the PAC page on the district's website.

## **Looking Ahead**

While having mixed feelings about the immediate impact of our parent engagement work this year, through this process the PAC learned a great deal about issues specific to middle schools - as well as parent concerns about other issues. Despite the challenges of the joint community engagement initiative we have begun building new working relationships with district staff. Together with PPS and district leaders we have identified “lessons learned” from this process, and strategies for strengthening the district’s future community engagement efforts.

Based on what we have heard from parents for the past several years and related to the district’s own priorities, the PAC is likely to continuing addressing these issues next year:

- Monitoring implementation of the district’s parent engagement plan, to ensure district leaders establish clear timelines, deadlines, and accountability measures for meeting specific standards for engaging parents at school sites and at the district level
- Advocating to ensure the district sets high standards, provides meaningful support, and holds teachers and administrators accountable for improved student learning outcomes
- Working with the Afterschool for All Advisory Council and SFUSD staff on plans to align district-managed afterschool programs, to support a collaborative effort that expands access to high-quality programs.

*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).*

**Appendix: The PAC's Goals & Achievements for School Year 2010-2011**

<b>Project / Issue</b>	<b>Goals/Objectives We Set</b>	<b>Achievements</b>
Community engagement in middle school redesign, program placement and assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct 15 forums</li> <li>Reach 500 people</li> <li>Present report of findings and recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two planning workshops = 60+ people</li> <li># of forums/focus groups = 19</li> <li># of participants = 850</li> <li>Report of findings &amp; recommendations</li> </ul>
Monitor and support implementation of the district's Parent Engagement Plan.	Did not have # goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in hiring committee for new Director for Family Engagement</li> <li>Have met 4 times w/new director</li> </ul>
Support parent engagement in SIG/Superintendent's Zone schools	Did not have # goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in 4 meetings of Bayview Zone CBO and parent collaboratives</li> <li>Reported our concerns in BOE report</li> </ul>
Inform changes to SFUSD transportation policy	Did not have # goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met 2 times with district team</li> <li>Orla came to PAC meeting</li> </ul>
Improve school food/lunches	Did not have # goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in focus groups conducted by SFUSD/DPH/Food Bank</li> </ul>
Addressing teacher and administrator standards, support, and accountability	To develop and implement Parent Concerns Tool-Kit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worked with PPS and PTA to develop a Parent Concerns Tool-Kit</li> <li>Conducted three external focus groups</li> <li>Met w/SFUSD Cabinet to present the Tool-Kit and orient staff who will implement tools</li> </ul>
Support Special Education reforms in coordination with CAC for Special Education	Did not have # goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met with Support for Families and CAC for Special Ed.; participated in resource fair</li> </ul>
Work with Afterschool for All Advisory Council & inform SFUSD after-school program alignment	Did not have # goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michelle was PAC rep. to Afterschool for All Advisory Council &amp; working group</li> </ul>
Present reports at all regular Board of Education meetings, and meet with individual Board commissioners & SFUSD staff to represent parent voices on district issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports at 15 BOE meetings</li> <li>Hold 4 meetings with Board members and other SFUSD leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PAC at 17 regular meetings, 5 Ad-Hoc and 2 Curriculum committee meetings</li> <li>Met with Rachel Norton, Jill Wynns, Myong Leigh, Richard Carranza, Kevin Truitt, Tom Ruiz, Orla O'Keeffe, and twice with Superintendent's Cabinet</li> </ul>
Participate in Parent Involvement Coalition.	Did not have # goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helped set agenda &amp; lead the PIC before district stopped convening it</li> <li>Participated in 2 meetings of new coalition convened by Mission Grads.</li> </ul>
Maintain/sustain/grow the PAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fill 4 seats in Dec. &amp; 5 in June (total = 9)</li> <li>Renew \$5,000 contract with SFUSD</li> <li>Place 4 articles in media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Filled 4 seats in Dec. and 3 in June (total = 7)</li> <li>Renewed contract with SFUSD, plus \$5,000 to cover forum direct costs</li> <li>Quoted in 1 article (<i>SF Examiner</i>) and placed "Issues" box in <i>School Times</i></li> </ul>
<b>Total # participants in events</b>	<u>Goal for year:</u> 500 parents	<b><u>Achieved:</u> (w/partners): 900 people</b>