



# San Francisco Board of Education Parent Advisory Council

## Report to the Board of Education

January 12, 2016

The role of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is to represent parent voices and perspectives to inform Board of Education policy discussions and decisions. This report provides highlights from the PAC's findings from the Our Children, Our Families Council Community Conversations conducted in November 2015.

### Our Children, Our Families Council Community Engagement Campaign

From November 3 through December 1, 2015, the PAC **heard from over 250 parents and** community members in **20 conversations**, **five** of which were conducted entirely in the **parents' primary language (Spanish or Chinese)** to help inform the work of the OCOF Council. These conversations were held at community organizations across the city and our approach was very intentional.

The PAC strategically reached out to hear from families and communities experiencing some of the greatest disparities, challenges and inequities in San Francisco, as documented in the [OCOF Council Data Report 2015](#). This approach allowed us to reach parents, community members and providers already involved in various systems of care and support, such as Families and Youth in Transition, foster youth, recently arrived immigrant families, and communities of color, who tend to experience a disproportionate number of the inequities found in our institutions, systems and society at large.

The majority of participants were African American and Latino, 30% and 29% respectively, followed by Chinese 11%, White 10%, Pacific Islander 8%, American Indian 6%, Filipino 3%, other Asian 3%, and other Non-white .5%. Other demographics of the participants include:

- 38% speak a language other than English in their home
- 72% of their children qualify for free or reduced-price meals
- 26% of their children receive Special Education services
- 6% were either a foster parent or provider of a student in foster care

### Summary of Findings by Theme

The following is a brief summary of the key themes taken from a larger report the PAC provided to the Our Children, Our Families Council. This report includes themes that relate to the work of the district, students' learning and their access to opportunities. For a link to the full report [click here](#).

### Key Theme: Meaningful Education – Quality Schools, Engaged & Connected Students

- **Parents described classrooms as too large and impacted by all of the various student needs and diverse learning foundations.**
- **Parents voiced a desire for quality schools staffed with qualified teachers** who build on their students' strengths, are culturally sensitive, hold high expectations, and are trained to work with "*OUR*" kids.
- Parents **emphasized the need for greater support for parents to advocate for their children**, especially for those new to the U.S., navigating the IEP process, have low literacy skills or whose children are falling "*through the cracks.*"
- They requested **more supports** and an overall **well-rounded education**, which includes rich **arts, music and STEM programs** in and out of school.
- **Nearly every conversation mentioned the concern about behavioral issues in the classroom.**
- **Underrepresented student groups, such as Samoans, are falling through the cracks.**
- **Newcomer students find it difficult to transition to larger school communities.**

### Key Theme: Transportation

- **Parents emphasized that transportation directly affects:**
  - **School choice and attendance**
  - **Parent engagement and involvement**
  - **Participation in afterschool programs and events, sports, and extra-curricular activities**
  - **Access to children, youth and family support systems and resources**
  - **Safety to and from school.**
- **Families of children with disabilities want more support on school buses.**

### Key Theme: Workforce Development & Employment

- Participants **identified a desperate need for more job training and skills development programs for both youth and adults in order to have greater opportunities.**
- **Need for more student internships, including with local tech companies.**
- **African American parents in the Bayview** voiced their **frustration that their children are not benefiting from the internships and jobs** with the tech companies growing in their backyard.

### Key Theme: Access to Technology and Internet

- **Participants cited a lack of universal access to technology and the Internet at home.**
- **Students lack basic computer skills and parents are concerned this impacts their children's performance and ability to competitively perform the new computerized assessments and other school assignments.**
- **Not all schools have computer labs or adequate access to computers.**
- **Parents often are inadvertently excluded from school and digital teacher communications.**

## Recommendations from SFUSD Families

### Key Theme: School Quality, Engaged & Connected Students

- **Place more highly qualified teachers in under-performing schools**
- Continue to **provide and expand quality professional development** in these areas:
  - Cultural competency
  - Differentiation of instruction
  - Building relational trust
  - Addressing discipline and behavior issues through positive interventions
- **Lower class size** to support meeting students' needs
- **Provide teachers support with classroom management.**
- **Increase support for discipline and behavioral issues** in schools.
- **Help newcomer students and families understand U.S. culture, navigate the educational system and support their transition to larger schools.**
- **Expand internships, mentor and workforce development programs.**
- **Improve supports and services for Pacific Islander students** to prevent them from "falling through the cracks."

### Key Theme: Transportation

- **Revisit the impact transportation service has on school attendance, student engagement and school choice to determine whether the expansion of transportation services is warranted.**
- **Provide central pick up and drop off zones for SFUSD schools.**
- **Provide transportation for foster youth to ensure school stability and home placements** that allow access to their school of origin.

## Key Theme: Internships, Workforce Development & Employment

- **Increase** the number of **summer jobs, internships and workforce development programs** available for youth.

## Key Theme: Access to Technology and Internet

- Help families **gain access to computers** and the **Internet** to bridge the digital divide.
- **Urge tech companies in S.F.** to invest financially, provide internships and **“adopt two or three schools.”**
- **Create mentorship programs that specifically partner with tech companies.**
- Support the **electronic transfer of records (CUM folders) to expedite supports for foster youth.**

### Increase Transparency, Accountability and Communication with Families

The PAC recognizes the district is taking steps to address many of the concerns parents raised during these conversations and many are not new. Nevertheless, we also know that these efforts are not always evident to families on the ground. Therefore, it’s important to demonstrate some level of responsiveness to indicate their voices have been heard and noted. As one parent urged,

*“We want proof, evidence and acknowledgement that we’ve been heard.” –Parent from the African American Parent Advisory Council*

Many parents participated in these conversations with the hope that their input would yield better outcomes for their children and families. The PAC feels a sense of responsibility to let them know to what degree their voices have an impact on improving and increasing better results for their students. We believe a crucial step in the process of engaging families is to communicate back to them where and how the input made a difference.

To this end, the PAC is requesting to partner with SFUSD to ensure we develop successful channels of communications with our families to inform them of policy changes, and concrete actions and outcomes that occur as a result of their input. We believe this will foster trust with SFUSD families and strengthen the overall goals of the district.

*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 visit our website at [www.pacsf.org](http://www.pacsf.org)*